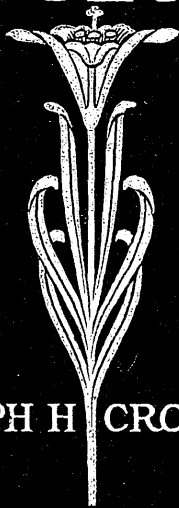


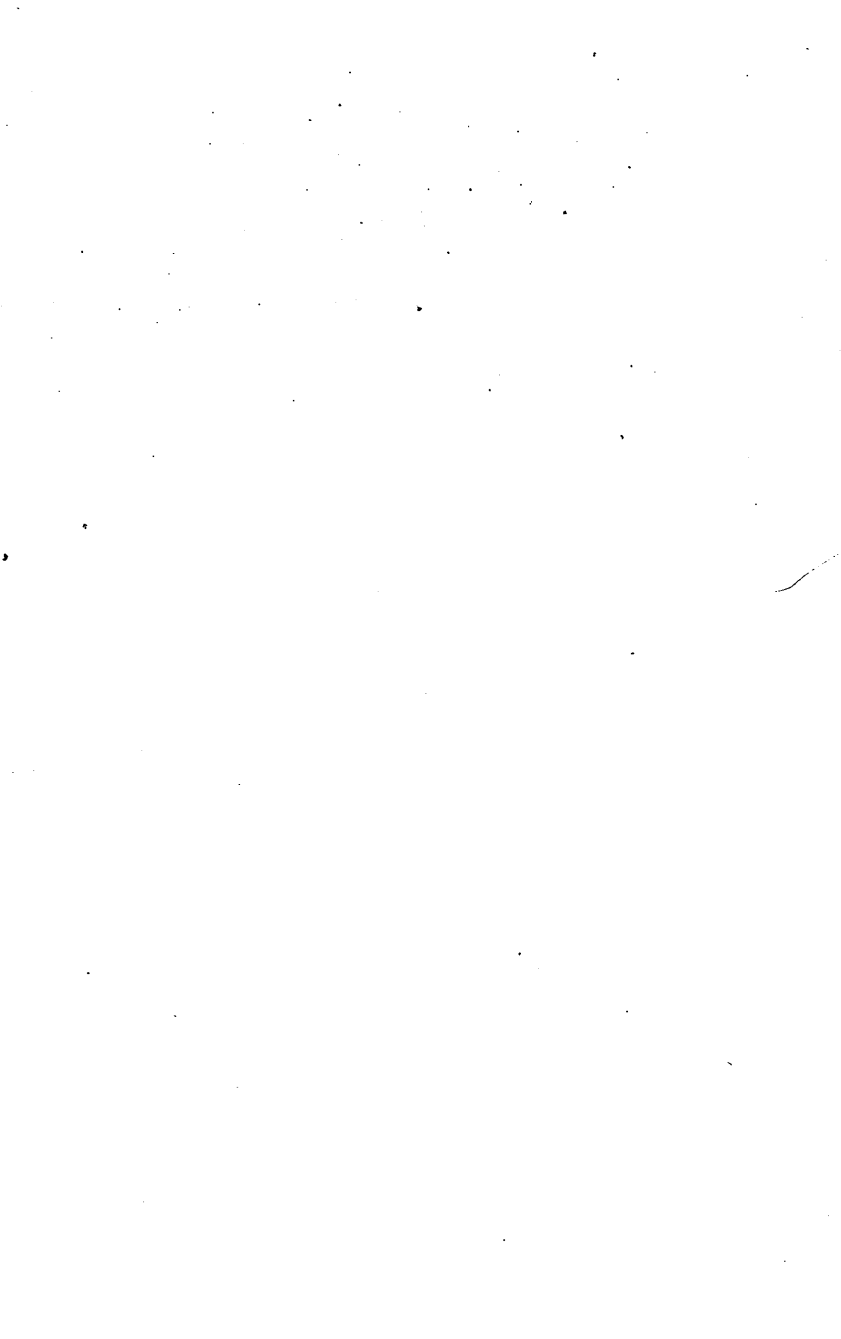
THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS



JOSEPH H CROOKER

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OF JESUS**

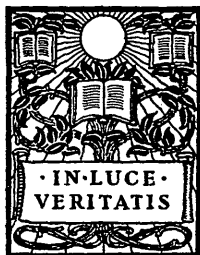
THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS

BY

JOSEPH HENRY CROOKER

Author of "THE CHURCH OF TOMORROW," "RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM IN AMERICAN EDUCATION," "THE CHURCH
OF TO-DAY," "PROBLEMS IN AMERICAN SOCI-
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I. JESUS AND THE MODERN MYTH-MAKERS

We are confronted in these days with the demand, made even in the name of religion by eminent ministers: "Christianity must be separated from history"!¹ The faith of mankind, we are told, must be spiritualized,—God save the mark!—by renunciation of the historical Jesus that we may follow a mystical *Christ-Ideal*, the poetical and speculative product of man's effort to humanize God. No Jesus of Nazareth ever lived in Galilee. The accounts that center in Nazareth are as legendary as the story of Bethlehem. The narratives in the Gospels constitute a fanciful fabric, no more real than the legends of the Hindu Krishna or the Indian Hiawatha. To be strictly scientific and rationally religious,

¹ See articles in recent numbers of *The Hibbert Journal* by two prominent Congregational ministers of Great Britain, Rev. R. Roberts and Rev. Dr. Kerr C. Anderson.

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we must at once and forever surrender the human Jesus.

Moreover, even if such a man ever lived, the fact is of no special consequence, as his figure is too dim and his message too imperfect to serve these modern days. Just as though we "modern men" had become demigods! It is insisted that we must give our allegiance, which, however, need be no more than a complacent gesture of condescension, to a vague *Christ-Ideal* floating on the cloud curtains of vagrant imagination. All this, too, is strangely put forth in behalf of human progress and for the promotion of true Christianity!

One thing is certainly evident: To attempt to separate Christian Faith from history is like separating the plant from the root or the building from the foundation. The future of America will not be made glorious by turning Washington into a myth and the Federal Constitution into a patchwork of fancy. So too, with Christianity; no mystical *Christ-Ideal* can ever take the place of the Jesus of the first three Gospels.

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The triumphant power and unfading glory of Christianity lie, not in its theological explanation of Jesus, or speculative creations built about his name, but in the administration of the spirit and message of Jesus himself. The neglect to give chief place to Jesus in religious nurture and character building is a blunder of gigantic dimensions. We may well remember that there is a superstition of rationalism which is as imperfect and injurious as the errors of traditional theology. The persistence of various *Christ-Ideals* means the historic projection of a supremely dynamic human life, which these ideals have striven to honor and interpret. The task of the hour is not to separate Christianity from history, but rather to rescue Jesus from tradition and dogma.

What these historical nihilists claim should be done, has often been tried, and all such efforts have proved futile and harmful. This was the aim of all the varying Gnostic parties in the early church. They tried to cut loose from historic fact. They gave free rein to imagination and

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plunged into the chaotic depths of extreme mysticism. But the Christian church would have none of their mere fancy work. The Arians later presented a mongrel Christ, neither true God nor real man, and the Christian consciousness would not accept the monstrosity, because unwilling (among other reasons) to abandon the historic Jesus. Athanasius was in error, not because he disowned the historic Jesus (which he did not attempt to do) but because he limited *sameness* of substance to one person. We reach the whole truth by proceeding in the line of Athanasius and affirming the divinity of all souls and the incarnation of God, not in one individual, but in humanity itself. However imperfect the formula which Leo the Great compelled Christendom to accept, it asserted that Jesus was not only true God of God, but also true man of man. Whatever of error existed in the formula was just here: It separated Jesus from history; precisely what our modern myth-makers are asking us to do.

But the signs of the times all show that

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Christendom is seeking, not for a more mystical Christ, but for a more historical Jesus. The larger triumphs of Christian Faith to-day are following the return of the church to the historic facts of the Gospels. And our sanest scholarship now shows us that the slow aggregation of evangelical materials to form these Gospels, while gathering by the way incidental legend and occasional error, reveals general historical verity and demonstrates the existence of a vast personality to be reported. The extent of legendary material has been very much exaggerated.

We owe much to Strauss and Renan. Their fearless inquiries were helpful, but scholars now see that their views of Jesus were in many respects more mythical or legendary than anything in the Gospels. Some modern critics are greater myth-makers than the romancers who wrote the apocryphal gospels. We are beginning to realize that some of the extreme theories about Jesus so airily set forth by certain "higher critics" are as unscientific and unsubstantial as the wildest speculations of

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the ancient Gnostics. Their explanations of Jesus put a greater tax upon credulity than the evangelical miracles themselves. Their "Christ-fable" is a more fabulous creation than the fantastic mysticism of Marcion or Valentinus respecting Christ. We turn with a sense of profound relief from these modern legends to the gospel page, which, in comparison, seems refreshingly sane and decidedly realistic. Some recent "scientific" interpretations of Jesus are more dogmatic and run farther into the realm of the "unknown and unknowable" than all the speculations at Nicæa and Chalcedon.

There are even religious teachers, like Rev. A. Kalthoff of Bremen, Germany, a man of no mean ability (died in 1907), who hold that the gospel story is merely a dramatic representation of the struggles of the proletariat of the Roman Empire for mastery; an idealization of class emancipation; a poem in praise of the poor and lowly.¹ On the other hand, there are scholars, like Prof. William B. Smith of Tulane Uni-

¹ See "Das Christus Problem," 1903.

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versity, who claim that the Christian Faith represents, not the deification of a man, but the humanization of God. The figure of Jesus is the personification of the Logos philosophy and other religious ideals and yearnings. No such man ever actually lived. He writes: "This most interesting and most important of all historic phenomena [the gospel story of Jesus], is comprehensible and must be comprehended as a total product of the totality of historic-religious-philosophic-ethic conditions prevailing around the Mediterranean."¹ These and others freely indulge their fancies, after having exaggerated the uncertainties revealed by Gospel Criticism. As fantastic as such views may seem, they are held by enough intelligent people to-day to make it necessary to point out briefly their unsubstantial character. They are, in reality, the products of modern myth-makers.

These theories reverse the processes of history and nullify all laws of historic evo-

¹ See article on "The Gospels" in *Encyclopædia Americana*, vol. xi.

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lution. Individuals are the trees around which the vine of legend grows. The legend may decorate, but it does not create, the historic character. A Lincoln myth is growing up in our midst even to-day, but it roots in an actual Lincoln of vast proportions. Without this historic fact as seed there would be no mythical growth about his great name. It was a real person, and not a myth, who freed the slaves.

Garments are fashioned to cover a human being. A man is not made simply to fill out existing clothes. A doctrine grows up to explain a historical character. The character is not invented merely to personify a doctrine. This is everywhere the law of historic progress, as the most casual glance at the story of religions makes clear. So, likewise, behind all messianic dreams of the apostolic age there was a real Messiah who, by his love, stirred hearts to dream of love. Behind all speculations about the cross was the Man who there died heroically, for otherwise there would have been no Christianity. The cross, as an instrument of cruel execution,

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would never have become the symbol of triumphant love, had not a supremely loving man there triumphed over hate and death. It took tremendous personal power to change an instrument of shame into a symbol of glory. Mere legend, apart from a supreme character, could never have accomplished such historic results as we find in the Christian church. History does ignore a vacuum, and everywhere great events do issue from grand lives.

Moreover, it is always a real man who attracts to himself a popular ideal or expectation, and, reshaping it, becomes its authoritative representative. A popular enthusiasm lights on an individual and glorifies him. The story of the leader is not, however, merely a fanciful product of enthusiasm. Puritans may have idealized Cromwell, but he was not simply Puritanism idealized. The fact that Jesus was radically unlike the popular messianic ideals of his time, and yet that he inspired people to believe in him as Messiah, is absolute demonstration of two things: his actual existence and his superior character.

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The gospel story is not the personification of the popular messianic ideal, as it must have been, had there really been no actual Jesus. If only a fancy picture, it could have pictured only the prevailing beliefs.

The grand originality of the gospel and the immense difference between it and the then current expectations prove the historicity of Jesus. If only popular ideals had been at work, the Gospels, as we have them, with their clear originality, could not have come into existence, for the product could not have risen above its source. And also the fact that Jesus did inspire people to believe in him as the Messiah, while he himself was wholly unlike the popular messianic expectations, is strongest evidence of his spiritual greatness. He could have won their faith, in opposition to those common hopes, only by superlative personal worth and power.

All this and more is made clear as noon-day by a brief comparison of Christianity and its most prominent ancient rival,—the cult of Mithra. The contrasts are striking, and they are clearly destructive of the

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theories which we are now considering. In the church we manifestly have the personal influence of an historical character, overlaid and disguised somewhat by the Logos philosophy, but everywhere we find a tenacious hold upon Jesus as a real man. Whatever else was asserted about him, that fact was firmly held and zealously guarded. And here, below all speculations about him as Son or Logos, lay his power over the plain people. A brother man had actually lived a divine life. A clear apprehension and a warm appreciation of his purity, his mercifulness, his devotion, his helpfulness, dying for others,—these were the creative and conquering elements of the early Christian Faith.

The worship of Mithra, on the other hand, was manifestly nothing more than reverence for an ideal, mystical, fluctuating, and unsubstantial. There was, among its devotees, not even any pretense of historicity. A heroic and gracious figure in many respects, but no one pointed to Mithra, and said, Such a being actually lived! The two—Jesus and Mithra—

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stand apart, separated by celestial diameters, although the latter has some attractive and inspiring features. To say that Jesus was simply another ideal figure, like Mithra, is woefully to misread and misrepresent history. The Gospels themselves are not needed in evidence to make this clear. Moreover, the historic results, independent of the evangelical documents, also show the profound difference, and make clear the historic reality of Jesus. Mithraism was unable to compete successfully with the church, just because of this very lack of historicity. The Mithra ideal was destitute of personal authority. Its followers could not claim: This being once actually lived! Here was the main source of its ethical weakness. It lacked educative effectiveness because not rooted in historic reality.

Ideals do, indeed, have vast power, and they are in some respects more attractive and helpful than prosaic realities. But in this realm of Christian nurture, it is only life that communicates life. At this point we touch the mistake of Edward Caird, so

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long one of the most notable leaders of Oxford University, who contended that the ideal Christ is alone important.¹ But no personification of patriotism could have done for America what the example of the actual patriotism of a real Washington has accomplished. One imperfect but loving mother of flesh and blood is worth a hundred ideals of motherhood. What has made men Christians has not been the ideal Christ of philosophy, but the story of an actual brother man, who loved God and men supremely.

There are some, like Prof. George B. Foster of Chicago University, who contend that, if Jesus never existed, nothing essential to religion would be lost, because the ethical teachings of the Gospels would remain and would be just as authoritative without him.² But this claim is based upon a totally erroneous view of the real meaning and ministry of Christianity. As true and beautiful as the Sermon on the Mount really is, the creative power of the

¹ See article in *The New World*, vol. vi., 1897.

² See "The Function of Religion."

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Christian Faith does not spring from it, but from the life which produced the remarkable group of teachings. Christianity is not a bundle of precepts, but the spirit of a life. Glorious as that message was, the dynamic of Christianity lies not in it, but in the Master. The superiority of the Christian Faith resides not alone or chiefly in its ethical system, but rather in the spiritualizing life of its Founder; not in didactic sayings, however beautiful, but in a beautiful and life-giving character; not even in interesting parables, but in an inspiring and educating personality. To say it makes no difference whether he ever lived, for we have the Golden Rule, is to miss the secret of Jesus and to misrepresent the genius of Christianity. The ethical maxim, which we know as the Golden Rule, was previously known to the world. What, however, has made it a powerful *rule of conduct* in Christendom is the Golden Life out of which it came.

Another serious error lies imbedded in this claim put forth by Prof. Foster. It is a fact that, in the world of science in gen-

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eral, a truth is wholly independent of its discoverer: the theory of evolution is not true because taught by Darwin. But in the world of ethics, a vastly different realm, the moral quality of the teacher adds power to the precept. The personality behind does not make the message true, but it does give impetus and effectiveness to it. It does make a difference *who* says things. The capacity of a statement to make character depends vitally upon the character of the teacher. If we should strike down Jesus and remove his far-shining name from our historic heavens,—the man who actually lived his gospel,—that evangel of love and hope would be robbed of a very large part of its power over human hearts.

To make this clear, let us take a modern instance: Would it make no difference to us if there were no Lincoln behind the Gettysburg speech? The question answers itself! What makes history are lives, not words; not abstract principles, but truth and love incarnate in personalities. The church is vastly more than an ethical ped-

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agogue: it is the custodian of a creative life. Its task or function is to communicate the spirit of that life. To plant gospel sayings in the minds of men is good, but to set hearts on fire with the spirit of Jesus is the mission of Christianity. The arrow is useless without the strong arm behind the bow. What turns the Golden Rule into an actual rule of life is the spirit of Jesus within the heart. A little Christian enthusiasm is worth more than a storehouse full of mere theological erudition, positive or negative.

To make real Christians, the Gospels, with their poetical touches here and there, are a hundred-fold more valuable than the modern myths about Jesus presented by our Biblical nihilists, who torture texts and ignore history. The gospel legends—the few that are present in the evangelical documents—are more valuable educational agencies than the myths of some higher critics, because the former really report the spirit of Jesus, while the latter merely reflect the fancies of a modern romancer. In one case we find the heart-beat of an actual

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personality; in the other, we see only the artificial movements of an automaton.

When we compare the story of Jesus as given in the first three Gospels, taking account of all their legendary accretions, with the spectral figure presented by the modern myth-makers, how distinct and substantial the life in the evangelical documents appears! Even the "Logos-Jesus" of the Fourth Gospel looks realistic and historical beside the fancy-pictures of our extreme critics. Their Christ is harder to explain and far less human, more miraculous and less attractive, more mystical and less lovable. In their hands he ceases to be a Giver of Life. He becomes as distant and as indistinct as the old Christ of Dogma. A Gospel Criticism that removes Jesus into a fantastic dreamland, though speaking in the name of science, is as bad as the old Gnosticism that disguised him in mystical speculations.

II. THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL TO JESUS

Those who advocate the substitution of an *Ideal-Christ* for the historical Jesus ap-

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peal to the apostle Paul, saying: He was the real founder of Christianity, and he cared nothing for the man Jesus: He preached only Christ, the Lord from heaven. Now, the truth is that without Jesus there would have been no "apostle" Paul: His speculations focused in Jesus; and yet, his *Christ-Ideal* did not obliterate or ignore the man Jesus. He constructed much of the machinery of the church, but the motive power that then ran it came, as it now comes, not from him, but from Jesus, love for whom had made him an apostle, "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation," Rom. i, 16.

I. Too much has been made of the fact that Paul refers in his letters so little, by way of specific allusion, to the biography and message of Jesus. But why should he? He was writing to people as familiar as himself with the facts of Jesus' life. These hastily written letters were not sermons to unbelievers but exhortations to fellow disciples. In writing to a brother, it is not necessary to describe one's mother.

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II. The implications of the man Jesus and his gospel are, however, everywhere present in these epistles. More than the specific references,—“of the seed of David,” Rom. i, 3; “made of a woman,” Gal. iv, 4,—is the basic assumption of the human Jesus, which underlies the whole superstructure of the “Gospel of the Cross.” Paul’s creed needs a historical Jesus as much as a historical Adam. Take away the real man who suffered on Calvary and all meaning and power would vanish from the Pauline doctrine. However much he may have added to the older view of Jesus, that much was added to explain a historic character. The “blood of Christ” was real human blood (Rom. iii, 25), for we ourselves are “joint heirs with Christ,” Rom. viii, 17. In this connection, supreme importance must be given to the text: “Like minded one toward another after the *example* of Jesus Christ,” Rom. xv, 5.

III. Although Paul quoted so few of the sayings now found in the Sermon on the Mount, which, we must remember, was not

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written in his day, its teachings are everywhere presupposed. Take these texts: "For even Christ pleased not himself," Rom. xv, 3,—the whole gospel is there summarized. A dozen sayings of Jesus come to expression in the text: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh," Gal. v, 24. What direct and forcible testimony also in the words: "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil *the law of Christ*," Gal. vi, 2. It would be difficult to describe more clearly the essential teachings of Jesus in few words than Paul did in such passages as Rom. xii, I Cor. xiii, I Thess. v. The spirit here is identical with that of Jesus; but between these passages and the religious ideal of the young rabbi sitting at Gamaliel's feet, Saul before his conversion, whose method and spirit may be found in the Talmud, a wide chasm intervenes. The question arises: Who carried Paul across this chasm from narrow Phariseeism to cosmopolitan sympathies? Who produced this radical transformation? From whom did he learn these new principles of life? He himself tells us that they

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came from "Jesus our Master," Rom. iv, 24.

IV. While there is more in Paul's letters about the Cross than about the details of the career of Jesus, we must not thereby conclude, as some have, that the apostle was indifferent to the man Jesus. This particular matter was prominent in his writings—his sermons to win converts would have shown more of the evangelical facts—because it was the point which was then in dispute. But Paul reached this cosmic interpretation of Jesus, because the Master seemed to him a more colossal character than he did to the original disciples. The "Gospel of the Cross," however, implies not only a real man, but a mighty human personality. The implication of such words as these, "He became poor" (II Cor. viii, 9), shows, not only that the apostle was acquainted with the humble rank of Jesus, but also that he regarded him as a real man. Even Paul's assertion of Christ's preëxistence does not, as so often claimed, detach him from the human race, because he himself, like others

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of his time, really believed in the preëxistence of all souls.

And nothing could more forcibly illustrate Paul's keen insight into the essential spirit of Jesus' life, his own love for him and loyalty to him, than these words: "I beseech you by *the meekness and gentleness of Christ*," II Cor. x, 1. Here, in few words, he lays hold of what was most fundamental in Jesus, and he also affirms what was most vital in his own thought, far deeper and more central than his mystical speculations about Christ,—*his living faith in Jesus*.

V. Two Pauline texts have been much used by those who strive to show that the apostle had no interest in the man Jesus,—and very incorrectly used. One is this: "The gospel which was preached of me is not after man," Gal. i, 11. But this does not mean indifference to the historical Jesus, much less ignorance of the details of his life. Paul here has in mind his own peculiar interpretation of Jesus' person and mission, his "Gospel of the Cross," which, indeed, did not come to him from

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others but from the operations of his own nature, and yet, it was a gospel which he never would have possessed, if the light of Jesus' mighty personality had not luminously fallen across his pathway. He had discovered more in Jesus than the original disciples had seen: this was "not after man," but his more glorious interpretation implies a great life to be interpreted. An ardent disciple of Tolstoy may have an original and peculiar view of his master, not derived from his personal friends; and yet, this does not mean ignorance of, or indifference to, the details of the life of the great Russian.

When Paul wrote about his experience on the road to Damascus and referred to the Christ "revealed in me," he does not make that experience very intelligible. But two things are plain: First, that psychologically his experience implies knowledge of the man Jesus. He could not have come out of that experience with faith in Christ unless he had gone into it with some knowledge of Jesus, whose followers indeed he was then engaged in persecuting.

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And it is absurd to claim that Paul knew nothing of the teacher whose disciples he was trying to punish. His zeal in persecution proves some familiarity with the life of Jesus. The upholders of slavery who dragged Garrison through the streets of Boston knew something of the abolitionist; otherwise there would have been no mob!

The only satisfactory psychological explanation of this transforming crisis in his life lies in the fact that new information about Jesus came to him on this journey, or that the detached elements of knowledge about Jesus in Paul's mind were so combined with his previous speculations, that the whole mass was fused together, and out of this melting pot of ecstasy issued his "Christ-Ideal,"—"revealed in me," "not after man." But the crystallizing impulse came from the historical Jesus.

And this leads us to the second fact of great importance in this connection: When Paul came out of this experience, he at once identified his "Christ" with the Jesus of the original disciples, which he

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could not have done if he had been indifferent to the prophet of Nazareth. He, indeed, found more in Jesus than they had seen, but his "Lord from heaven" was the same, so far as human form or historical reality, as the Master they loved. There was a profound difference between Paul and the Twelve, but the point in controversy referred to the continuance of Mosaic statutes, not to the reality or supremacy of Jesus himself. If Paul had been indifferent to the life and message of Jesus, as claimed by our historical nihilists, how could James, Peter, and John have had any fellowship at all with him, as they did? For that would have been a hundred-fold more serious than the problem about the Law. The fact that they did not charge him with indifference to the man Jesus (no hint of any such accusation appears in the record), proves that Paul, with all his mysticism, loved the same historical character that they honored.

VI. There are those who argue that Paul could not have been familiar with the story of Jesus' life, because, if he had, he would

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have appealed to him in this very controversy with the Twelve about the Law. But this argument is invalid for several reasons: Jesus did not directly set the Law aside as Paul did; instead, he planted seeds of spiritual truth, which, when they matured, would, as they did, crowd the old statutes aside. All this Paul saw, as the Twelve did not, and he carried the vital principle of Jesus to practical application. Jesus' life was itself sufficient warrant for Paul's new departure, without any appeal to text or saying. The apostle did not have to quote particular sayings of Jesus at this point, because the radically new and supremely spiritual quality of Jesus' character, as a whole, had shown him an infinitely better way of life, and so had emancipated him from bondage to the Law. It was therefore chiefly his knowledge of Jesus and his insight into his character that freed Paul from the old bondage,—not any specific teaching so much as the general spirit of his life,—so that he could jubilantly exclaim: "O wretched man that

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I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death [involved in the Law]? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Master," Rom. vii, 24.

Here, also, in these words, is another proof of Paul's dependence upon Jesus: "I know and am persuaded by the Master Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself," Rom. xiv, 14. The principle here stated exactly describes the spirit of Jesus' life, and Paul would never have written such a sentence had he not been fully acquainted with that life and profoundly interested in it. Something surely occurred to lead Paul to set aside the Law, of which he had been a fanatical advocate. This something he himself asserted came from Jesus; and his own testimony certainly ought to be decisive. The supreme spirituality of that life of self-sacrificing love completely emancipated him. This implies knowledge of Jesus and a correct estimate of his spirit and purpose. It could not be otherwise. Can anyone imagine for a moment that a warm admirer of Lincoln,

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who looked upon him as a sort of demigod, would care nothing for the incidents of his life?

There is another much misused text which makes all this still more evident: "*Though we have known Christ after the flesh* [note the declaration of historical knowledge], yet now henceforth know we him no more," II Cor. v, 16. This does not prove indifference on Paul's part to the man Jesus. The reader of Allen's "*Life of Phillips Brooks*" might say the same thing in impatience over its senseless profusion of petty details. Paul probably felt, and rightly felt, that there was imminent danger that, in an over-emphasis of the *mere details* of Jesus' life,—the small gossip about petty things—the sublime meaning of his character and ministry would be missed.

VII. There is one thing more: Consider for a moment Paul's passionate loyalty to Christ, his surrender to one, who had died in shame on the Cross, so unlike the expected Messiah; his superlative devotion to him as a missionary, giving to the word,

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“apostle,” its permanent meaning and powerful inspiration. Hear his own words: “I count all things but loss, for the excellency of *the knowledge* of Christ Jesus my Master,” Phil. iii, 8. All this without any historic reality? All this without any real greatness there? All this without any personal interest in Jesus? And a contemporary at first persecuting his disciples! A psychological impossibility!

What really occurred in that experience near Damascus,—how much of nervous reaction or spiritual insight or ecstatic vision, or all combined, no one can tell and it is not very important for us to know. But the central fact probably was that, by the fusing of new information and illuminating reflection, Paul was led to see in Jesus the explanation of the mystery of providence and the revelation of the way of salvation. To account for this radical change, we must have some adequate cause: a historic person who satisfied his ideal of perfect righteousness, so lovable as to awaken his love, so supreme as to seem the image and ambassador of God, so commanding as to

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appear as the fulfillment of the Law, so powerful in spiritual creativeness as to operate as the Saviour of men.

The historical Jesus is then, the tree that bears all *Christ-Ideals*: without that educating personality they never would have been. The spiritual supremacy of the man Jesus at once captivated earnest hearts and won them to belief in his Messiahship, while transforming the messianic hope and giving to it a powerful ethical interpretation and influence. Their idealization of him took on the color and proceeded in the spirit of his gracious character. So later, the gospel, in entering into minds occupied by the Logos philosophy, necessarily had to accommodate itself to their intellectual equipment. But the fact that the term, Logos, was ever applied to him is superlative testimony to the majesty of his manhood and the vastness of his influence. Would any one ever have thought of calling Hillel, Seneca, or Augustus the incarnate Logos?

But far more than this: The character

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and message of this man recreated the Logos philosophy itself and set the world to discussing problems which still occupy the giant intellects of the race. All church historians have recognized the transformation of Christian Tradition effected by Hellenic speculation, but rarely has attention been adequately called to the more important fact: the radical transformation of Greek thought by the personality of Jesus himself. He took a fluctuating theory of the schools, with no ethical import and no religious efficiency, and, by its union with himself, made it a commanding religious dispensation, fixing for centuries the form of the God-consciousness and reconstructing, not only the topics and methods of Christian thought, but the prayers of the ages. The humanity of the Master was, of course, somewhat obscured, but what spiritual effectiveness and moral excellence he imparted to that old pagan philosophy!

Just to have accomplished this transformation was an immense service to mankind; and the fact that he made this pro-

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found and radical change in the world's thought and feeling demonstrates his superiority and entitles him to lasting honor and warmest praise. This transformation, being largely in the line of his own exalted character, is adequate proof of his historicity. The Logos theory was fitted to his form and it came to shine with his light. The historical Jesus, to change the figure, now stood on a new platform, but he was still Master. At the heart of all these speculations, presided a real man, of whom the church would not let go; and, for the masses, the moral beauty of the Nazarene never wholly veiled and the ethical message of sermon and parable never silenced, were more persuasive than the mysticism of the schools.

Nothing like this is presented by the stories of Krishna, to the level of which the critical nihilists of to-day strive to degrade Jesus of Nazareth. Read those non-Christian legends as carefully as you may, and you never see a human face looking through them. They do not represent the play of imagination about some historic

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figure, but rather they are purely poetical creations. In the Logos speculations of the church, however, we trace the conscious effort to explain and interpret a historical life, by whose character and message speculations are tested and formulas are guided. Mysticism did, indeed, jump into unwarrantable and purely fictitious realms, but it leaped from a historical personage, and it always ended by proclaiming that the dogma asserted truly represented the human fact!

But nothing like this is true in the case of Krishna. All is there vagrant fancy, with no appeal to a historic character, claiming: Such a person really lived! Not attempts to interpret a life were those ideal figures, but spontaneous creations. The Logos, on the one hand, laboriously *invests* Jesus against the protests of conservative tradition; Krishna, on the other hand, issued, freshly born, out of a mythological alembic. To put them both into the same class is a piece of historic nihilism and philosophical absurdity, of which any thoughtful mind ought to be ashamed.

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III. JESUS MORE THAN ANY CHRIST-IDEAL

Jesus, as a historical personality, is vastly more than any messianic title ever bestowed upon him, and also more than what any dogma has ever attributed to him. His simple but sublime character is more provocative of creative love and affectionate loyalty than any Gnostic speculation about him. His manly tenderness more powerful for shaping conduct than any of the dogmas debated at Nicæa or Constantinople. His human heroism more influential over heart and conscience for righteousness than any mysticism about him elaborated in scholastic cloister or Protestant conventicle. The real Jesus needs no apocalyptic glory to make him lovable and no celestial preëxistence to give him spiritual authority. He most clearly reveals the heart of God when left in the rank of humanity, and he most powerfully demonstrates the divinity of man when honored as the realization of human possibility. Better to love him as a brother than to lose him in a mystical Godhead!

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The sufficiency of Christianity is its religious efficiency; and its religious effectiveness lies in the historical Jesus. Christian mysticism, as related to the being of God and the redemption of man, has filled a large place in speculative theology, and it has exerted an important influence upon human conduct. But these matters have, after all, been subordinate. They have not been the creative forces of Christian nurture or character building. It is a very superficial view of the early church, for instance, which sees only its creed-making. What transformed the life of the Roman Empire was not the Logos speculation, but the gospel of Jesus: Christian Faith, not church dogma.

The doctrine of Jesus' sonship in the Godhead, however philosophically valuable and impressive, has had, by itself as a mere formula, little ethical influence, except as it has provided believers with an intellectual trellis over which the vine of life could run. And even here, the humanization of God, by carrying Jesus up into the Godhead, has been the chief value, confirming

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the conviction, no small matter, that God is as good as Jesus. To those who have thought with Beecher, "I know no other God but Christ," the dynamic part of the *Christ-Ideal* has been the human content. So that we may say: At the heart of all *Christ-Ideals* resides the historical Jesus, without whom these ideals would never have existed, or if born, would soon have vanished.

The belief in the mystical functions attributed to Christ as redeemer has exercised greater influence upon human life. The story of the Christ, dying for the sinner that God may be just while justifying the unrighteous, is full of pathos, and it has won millions of hearts to repentance and righteousness. There is persistent significance in this presentation of the *Christ-Ideal*. The sacrificial theory, however imperfect, has had a decided "cash value," to use a current term of our pragmatists. But through it all must operate, to be of any redemptive influence, the sense of historic reality. The missionary who should say that this was just "an ideal"

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would make no converts. Any one satisfied with a *Christ-Ideal* divorced from its historic basis would be like the man who should prefer the halo about the sun to the sun itself! But as the halo ripens no fruit, so the mere ideal will produce no Christian character. However expounded, Christ's redemptive ministry has effectiveness among men, only in view of the fact that a real man suffered in Gethsemane and conquered on Calvary.

We often forget that the Christ of Theology, in its superlatively mystical form, assumes from the side of humanity a supreme man as the realization of common possibilities, which it is his office to help us realize in ourselves. Its religious significance involves a real brother, however large the surplus of divinity affirmed. Only in this way has the story of the Garden any melting pathos; that of the Cross any tragic comfort; or that of the Resurrection any continuing glory.

There is no wire to communicate an electric impulse of triumphant life, except in a veritable kinship connecting him and our-

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selves. Why plead for likeness of life to him unless he was a real man? Why commend his example unless a veritable brother? Why use the story of his life for inspiration unless an identity of nature uniting us in one family of God? Why console ourselves as joint-heir with Christ unless he was a historic character? No mere fluctuating "ideal," cut loose from history, can be the channel of such redemptive helpfulness. Only a real personality can be a personal saviour. The power and authority to conquer sin reside only in the educating influence of a supreme person, who can and does command loyalty, devotion, love. Love of Christ has been love of actual human worth, not admiration for a mere vacuous, mystical figure.

The *Christ-Ideal* has, therefore, persisted, because projected and propelled by a historical personality. The story of Jesus has carried the power of salvation, because it is the account of a brother, who, however much more God-filled than we, was truly a kinsman. Loyalty to Jesus is impossible without conviction of his actuality;

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and such loyalty still prompts the world's noblest services. Those who are most loyal to him are most helpful to mankind. The discipleship, which he still inspires, operates through world sympathies and heroic sacrifices in thousands of ministries for the betterment of human life. When men speak of "God in Christ," they mean the spirit of God in a real man, but they do not mean that God is absent from other persons. The peculiar glory of Christianity is the fact that the more his disciples love Jesus, the more they love and serve their fellowmen.

The historical Jesus dominates all Christian speculations, and the most mystical *Christ-Ideals* of theology are loaded with the religious spirit and ethical temper of the Master. It is easy to overlook this important fact. In order to reassure ourselves at this point, let us go to Calvin to discover what the teachings of this dogmatist, who has so dominated Protestants, will show. In the pages of his "Institutes" devoted to this theme, there are many paragraphs full of mystical Christology;

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and certainly the great Genevan Reformer did not have the modern appreciation of the humanity of Jesus. And yet, the historical Jesus is not only everywhere assumed, but the spiritual quality of his life and message is always set foremost as the rule and inspiration of the Christian.

The following passage is very significant and refreshing: "This is the place to address those who, having nothing of Christ but the name and sign, would yet be called Christians. How dare they boast of this sacred name? None have intercourse with Christ but those who have acquired the true knowledge of him from the Gospel. . . . Doctrine is not an affair of the tongue, but of the life; it is not apprehended of the intellect and memory merely, like other branches of learning; but is received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds its seat and habitation in the inmost recesses of the heart. . . . To doctrine in which our religion is contained, we have given the first place, since by it our salvation commences; but it must be

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transfused into the breast and pass into the conduct, and so transform us into itself, as not to prove unfruitful," iii, 6, 4. Calvin's "Christ-Ideal" is not ours, certainly not identical with the Jesus of the first three Gospels; and yet, the historical Jesus presented, even to him, the supreme wisdom of life and the true way of salvation. Without the human Jesus, Calvinism would have had no ethical power.

The love of Jesus is the world's greatest character-building force: It has so operated for centuries and so it is in all lands to-day. The appeal to experience at this point is too decisive to leave any room for discussion. It may, indeed, be said that this is a superstition which is fast passing away, that the life and teaching of a Galilean peasant are no adequate guide and authority for the twentieth century. But the grandest men on the threshold of this century acknowledge him as Master and the most glorious work for human progress goes forward under the inspiration of his spirit. No superstition to-day is quite so deplorable as the whimsical attitude of

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those who ignore his church, question his gospel, or deny his existence.

To those who plead: Give us the religion of Jesus rather than mystical dogmas *about* him, we all say, *amen!* But let us remember that the mysticism, built up around Jesus in the creeds, has never been the heart of Christianity, and what has floated all theologies and flowed through all ordinances has been the educating personality of this master soul. The religion of Jesus is more in the hearts of his conservative disciples, in these passing days, than in the hands of his indifferent critics.

To those who complain that they are tired of the appeals for loyalty to Jesus, because what the world needs is faith in God, let it be said that even now the millions who have the most ethically efficient faith in God are those very people who are most loyal to Christ. Reverence for Jesus has always purified and strengthened worship of God. The most mystical *Christ-Ideal* has, after all, not so much supplanted, as revealed, the infinite Father of us all. And it has done this because, in its

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lowest estate, the Christ-dogma has had at its heart the humanity of the historical Jesus.

Some contend that what is most needed to-day is not more love of Jesus, but more love of man, because humanity represents something vastly larger than the Nazarene, and its sorrows are more persuasive than the tragedy of the Cross. While our neighbor is, indeed, nearer to us geographically than Calvary, nevertheless it is in the light of the gospel that the real need of the neighbor is most clearly revealed, and it is by the spirit of Jesus that we are most powerfully moved to serve that neighbor.

Jesus monopolizes no human heart, but rather stretches it to embrace the world. Here again the appeal to common experience is decisive: Those who truly love Jesus most, also love humanity most. In fact, love of Jesus means, necessarily, love for sinners and sufferers everywhere. The persistent significance of the *Christ-Ideal* is found in the fact that it has, even in its most mystical form, educated men in love

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for their fellows. And the power of the Ideal flows from the Historical Personality. To love Jesus who died to save others means inspiration to serve others ourselves. The agency most provocative and productive of love for humanity, has been this love of Jesus, the revealer and inspirer of divine love.

Does the scoffer ask: Why love Jesus? But why not? Who so lovable among the sons of man? Look far and wide, and find, if you can, one who so radiates purity, beauty, tenderness, sympathy! The world has long taken him as revelation of spiritual loveliness. To ignore all this is blindness of soul indeed!

Why love Jesus? To whom are we so indebted for the ethical atmosphere which we breathe and the spiritual bread of life which we eat? Consider for a moment what the world would be, if we should blot out everything connected with his name: Shut the churches, burn hymn and prayer books, lay waste the treasures of Christian art, tear out of statute books the laws that represent Christian morality, disband all

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missions, close schools and hospitals created by loyalty to Christ, scatter to the winds the books that breathe the Christian spirit, take from the home its Christian heritage and strike down the principle of liberty for man, woman, and child more due to him than to any one else: Do all this,—which would only be a beginning,—and what havoc would come to the things most precious and most cherished! To question the power and propriety of grateful love to Jesus is surely to confess a heart of stone.

Why love Jesus? So lovable in his character and so effective in multiplying love throughout the world: Surely these two reasons are adequate answer. But there is another: That we may become more lovable ourselves! This was the central plea of Channing, whom so many of us have forgotten, thinking that we have outgrown him, when in fact we have lost him in our spiritual blindness: eyes seared by the scorching lusts of secularity. “To be like Jesus” is a phrase that seems to offend the puffed egotism of some lib-

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erals, who resent the leadership of any master. Poor shallow souls who would find God's throne too low for a footstool! It did not seem unbecoming in a Theodore Parker to call him "Master," nor was it childish in James Martineau to yearn to be like him. Only little minds resent his spiritual authority, and only small hearts shut at his call for loyalty.

The persistent significance of the *Christ-Ideal* lies in the fact that behind all obscuring and fluctuating dogmas about Jesus stands a supreme historic character, who represents the realization of man's religious possibilities; who reveals the love which is in the heart of God toward humanity; and who, by his purity, his sympathy, his suffering, his self-sacrifice, made clearer the way of salvation and brought to bear a redemptive power upon human hearts. Jesus, like the atom of radium that seems inexhaustible in energy without dishonoring any other atom or breaking any law of the universe,—Jesus still continues to inspire human hearts with spiritual motives, sufficient for the tasks

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of life and effective in shaping an immortal destiny.

A mountainous soul, heaved up by providential forces underneath us all, who, seen from afar, lifts and lights the weary sons of man, assuring them of what they are to become when the creative purpose of God is completed: a Life imparting life, a Love inspiring love, a Master making the human more divine.

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His life is the perpetual rebuke of all time since. It condemns ancient civilization, it condemns modern civilization. Wise men we have since had, and good men; but this Galilean youth strode before the world whole thousands of years, so much of divinity was in him. His words solve the questions of this present age. In him the Godlike and the human met and embraced, and a divine life was born. Measure him by the world's greatest sons—how poor they are! Try him by the best of men—how little and low they appear! Exalt him as much as we may, we shall yet perhaps come short of the mark. But still was he not our brother; the son of man, as we are; the son of God, like ourselves? His excellence—was it not human excellence? His wisdom, love, piety,—sweet and celestial as they were,—are they not what we also may attain? In him, as in a mirror, we may see the image of God, and go on from glory to glory, till we are changed into the same image, led by the spirit that enlightens the humble. Viewed in this way, how beautiful is the life of Jesus! Heaven has come down to earth, or, rather, earth has become heaven. The Son of God, come of age, has taken possession of his birthright. The brightest revelation is this of what is possible for all men,—if not now, at least hereafter.

THEODORE PARKER.

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The word, "Jesus," has more historic significance than any other name in the annals of the human race. No other name has entered with such transforming and sanctifying influence into the thoughts and feelings of mankind. The words, *Buddha* and *Confucius*, have been reverently spoken by a greater number of human beings, but the followers of these sages have been comparatively monotonous masses without large historic importance. Moreover, while Buddha has been the centre of some philosophical speculation, Confucius has remained a prosaic figure inspiring neither the artist nor the theologian. But how remarkable are the creations that have been built upon Jesus, in character, in variety, and in number!

What literary activities have clustered about the name of Jesus, to tell his story and explain his mission! And now, at the

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end of the nineteen centuries since his day, the freshest book from the press, most eagerly sought by scholar and peasant, finding its way into the heart of Africa, through the jungles of India, into the seaports of China, is one that robes that figure in some new thought or sentiment.

Wherever the traveler goes among the cities of Europe, he sees on every side, rising over all other structures, the cathedrals, which in their massive grandeur, are a most impressive and wonderful testimony to the enduring influence of that great life. And the cross, his instrument of death, has become the supreme symbol of immortal life in a universal language of the heart. Few are the mountains on whose bleak crags its shadow does not fall! Few are the cities over whose teeming life its arms do not glisten! Few are the isles of the sea where it is not planted at the head of some grave! When we visit any art collection in the world, we find on every hand that genius has striven to immortalize the name of Jesus. The history of the

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Christ of Art, tells the story of European art for fifteen centuries. To portray his features and to perpetuate the accents of his ministry has been the inspiration of painting and sculpture.

Who can number the theological systems that have grown up about Jesus in these threescore generations? What labyrinths of speculation! Libraries piled full of books that attempt to explain the mysteries of his being. Councils have been called from the ends of the earth to decide certain questions respecting his nature and message. What infinite range of ideas has that name signified! Men have read into that word, "Jesus," everything from pure humanity to absolute deity.

Some of the greatest political movements of the race have been associated with the name of Jesus. The Holy Roman empire, the Crusades, the Saxon Reformation, the voyage of the Pilgrims to America to secure in the wilderness of the new world a peaceful home for their faith,—these movements represent certain phases of the historic significance of the Prophet of

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Nazareth. To-day, the pope rules at Rome in the name of Jesus, over an ecclesiastical order, which is the most marvelous system of administration that has ever come into existence. It is the supreme product of man's creative genius in the direction of polity and organization. It embraces in its design the whole race, and touches by its influence every land and people. It promises an assured perpetuity, in strange contrast to the fluctuating fortunes of ordinary dynasties. It was to spread a knowledge of the name of Jesus and to extend the power of the papacy that a queen bade Columbus pioneer a way to the peoples far across the seas.

The civilization that now encircles the globe; that holds the unexhausted energies and leavening powers of the race; that surrounds barbarism and contracts its limits; that fraternizes the nations; that breaks the chains of the slave, levels the walls of caste, and dissipates the darkness of superstition, is *christened* in honor of Jesus. We cannot say, as it was once said, that the forces of civilization all flow

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from Jesus as from a fountain—they must be regarded as inherent in human nature itself—yet it is a fact of history that where that name has gone, there has been the highway of humanity.

Socrates created an intellectual movement which is to-day a living factor in the world's progress, but no church has enshrined his memory in hymn and liturgy. Art has not clustered its creations about his name. The great sage of Athens remains as the wise teacher of a few students; the prophet of Nazareth abides in the common heart as the inspiring and comforting friend in every hour of need.

Mr. Froude instituted a comparison between Jesus and Cæsar. Cæsar embodied in admirably working institutions a theory of statecraft, which placed Rome on the way to those imperial achievements which are the wonder of historians, and which lifted humanity a long distance in the line of progress. He put the stamp of his genius upon the affairs of his time, and upon the life of distant ages. The imperial system which he founded

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has fired the ambition, and directed the energies of statesmen, while it has swayed the destinies of nations. The thought of Cæsar still lives in the policies of Europe. But no order like the Jesuits make him their master and leader. No churches, no paintings, no creeds have been created to publish his ideas or honor his character. No theologian has found in him a key to the mysteries of life and death. His name is not intoned in cathedral, nor is it whispered in cottage to cheer and to comfort.

Muhammed founded a religion, which contains universal elements, and is endowed with creative power. But the name of Muhammed has not meant so much nor has it created so much as the name of Jesus. Under the influence of the great Arab art blossomed in the Alhambra and learning flourished in Bagdad. But these were sporadic movements. Persian ethics, Hebrew piety, Greek philosophy and Roman civility have borne fruit in the nations associated with the name of Jesus and not with the name of Muhammed.

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Whether we speak of art, of literature, of philosophy, or of government, the vaster systems cluster about Jesus.

The horoscope divides the nations of the future between Muhammed and Jesus, and while Islam can probably do more at present for certain pagan races than the church, yet the civilization connected with the name of Jesus, will be dominant, because Christianity has in him the incomparably greater teacher; and also because it contains the garnered riches of the centuries. Moreover its peoples possess the maturer manhood.

To illustrate another phase of the historic significance of the word "Jesus," we may look at it in its relation to personal religion. It is not alone, there are other such names, yet it is preëminent. The influence of Aristotle is scholastic. It shapes the form of man's thought. The influence of Muhammed is disciplinary, it harnesses men into new habits. The influence of Confucius is didactic, it teaches people a formal system of conduct. The influence of Buddha is exemplary,

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illustrating an attitude of self-renunciation.

Now, the influence of Jesus is personal, putting us into companionship with a great life. Thus Christianity under all its creeds and rituals has been a personal religion. When men have been brought into contact with Jesus, they have felt themselves in the presence of a lovable and loving person; a man of thought, but something more than a teacher like Aristotle; a master, but something more than a disciplinarian like Muhammed; a moral leader, but something more than a tutor like Confucius; a perfect man, but something more than the one type like Buddha.

Jesus has stood for a tender intimacy of fellowship which no other prophet has ever inspired. There is loyalty to Muhammed, respect for Confucius, imitation of Buddha, but love for Jesus—men have taken him into their hearts. Jesus above all else has been a personal presence building himself into the lives of men. People have kept the wonderful Man who

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walked through the fields of Galilee in their most intimate and loving fellowship. Nothing like this, to the same extent or with equal spiritual power, has been true of any other character in history.

In view of these facts, we may well ask: In what did the preëminence of Jesus exist? What has given him such remarkable prominence in history; such vast influence over human lives? It explains nothing to say that he was God. That is simply a confession of reverent appreciation made by the adoring heart, not an interpretation reached by the exploring intellect. It is no explanation to say that God makes the grass grow. One does not explain the independence of America by saying that Washington was inspired. It is true that men sometimes imagine that the assertion of the deity of Jesus clears up the whole problem. But that is as irrational as the conclusion of the ancient Persians, who, when they could no longer tell who wrote the Avesta, asserted that God wrote it.

There are people who say that the

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preëminence of Jesus was in what he did, the works that he performed. But Jesus was not an organizer like Cæsar or Muhammed. He formulated no plans. He founded no ecclesiastical system. He drilled no emissaries. He elaborated no civic or religious machinery. His kingdom of heaven had no official framework. His movement was so destitute of organization that it has been the wonder of the world that it ever continued to exist. His beatitudes and parables seem like precious seeds carelessly scattered over the unfenced fields of humanity.

Others assert that the work of Jesus was the introduction of a new spiritual economy into the universe: the presentation of his blood in heaven, acting as a sedative, quieting God's anger; and operating on earth as a charm, recreating man's nature. He effected, the old theologians said, a supernatural reconciliation between God and man. But this is a far-fetched, cumbersome, materialistic scheme, which presents more difficulties than it solves. It has fortunately been abandoned

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by progressive men almost everywhere.

The old view has been crowded aside by the expulsive power of the truth itself. The presence of such an economy is not discoverable by psychologist or historian; its existence would invalidate all their scientific conclusions. The onward ways of Providence are in the same stately courses of law in Christendom as elsewhere. The cross is no hiatus in history between a natural and a mystical course of events. The personal influence of Jesus upon human life is an evident and powerful historical factor. This we can feel and understand. But the operation of a sacrificial and atoning agency, which is sometimes claimed for him, is not discoverable. When we deal with the vast and unquestioned power of Jesus in the world, we deal with the dynamics of a soul, not with the magic of an alien visitant.

There are some who contend that the source of Jesus's power lay in his message: he taught a *new doctrine of life*. The sublimity of his teachings is evident.

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But many of his beautiful precepts had already been set forth by prophet or psalmist. Jesus found much of the material of his message at hand, as was the case with Shakespere. What blossoms in the Sermon on the Mount has its roots in the Old Testament. But like the immortal bard, Jesus reshaped the material that he used; he gave it the touch of genius, he breathed into it the breath of life.

And yet, with all this in mind, we must hold that even his "sayings" do not describe or explain his preëminence. At best, *sayings* are outward, partial, and fragmentary. They can never serve as adequate index or measure of life. As John Morley so well says: "A man is always so much more than his words." There is an ideal of life, an aspiration of soul, a fragrance of sanctity which no words can express. There are riches of character for which no tongue has a language. The sayings of Jesus do much to record, but little to explain, his power. We must look behind the message to the creative master.

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Our key to the problem is this: The power of Jesus was not in what he *said*, but in what he *was*. It flowed from his rich and noble *personality*. There is a personal power, independent of deed or word, which is an indescribable but efficient ethical and historical force. It is the dynamic energy which inheres in character, as magnetism inheres in a loadstone. Moral greatness is radiant; it lights up dark places like a great sun. We all remember, how as children, we were thrilled with admiration that passed into aspiration, warmed to noble sentiments that prompted action, by contact with some saintly man or woman. We cannot remember what was said or done, but the proximity of a great personality awakened impulses that have never died.

We admit this fact in the most common remarks of every day life. When we say, He is a fine speaker but what he says would not amount to much if anyone else said it,—we recognize how the riches of an unusual personality flow out into the words and give them special significance and

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peculiar power. It is said of Channing, that when he read a passage of Scripture, he infused into it a new meaning. When he said "God" the hearer felt a thrill of uplifting devotion. It was his abundance of personal piety behind the words that gave them new and larger influence. If we examine our memory for the seasons of regeneration, when a commanding purpose was born within us which has been our banner in all our marches and battles, we shall find, as a rule, that the occasion was not an outlook upon Nature nor the study of a precept, but communion with a great character in real life, or in literature where real life is immortalized.

The importance of personality has been eloquently described by Dr. Hedge: "It depends, not so much on the clearness and fullness of the revelation, as on the personality with which it is associated, whether or not the revelation shall become an historic dispensation. The moral intuitions of Plato far transcended those of Muhammed, but the moral force, the momentum of personality, the quality of

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soul in Muhammed exceeded the genius of Plato. Adopted by Providence, the slender thought and vast soul of the Arab have rallied around them the fifth part of the human race, whilst the fuller revelation of the Greek could only modify Gentile and Christian theology with its intellectual leaven." This is simply to state, in brief, that life is larger and deeper than thought; and to move and impress human beings profoundly a sublime life will do what no mere theory or doctrine can possibly accomplish.

It is the power of personality that transforms and regenerates the world. It is the manhood working in the deed and speaking in the word that makes them significant. A great character sheds abroad an influence as cheering, as quickening, and as luminous as sunlight. It is, therefore, not what Jesus organized, not what he suffered, not what he said: we must look in the direction of his personality for an explanation of his influence. It was the sweet but strong majesty of his manhood that moved the people. It

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is said that the Gospels do not explain the power of Jesus over men. Of course they do not. They simply record the fact. He explains them; they do not explain him.

It was not because Jesus laid down the Golden Rule that he taught the people "as one having authority." It was because he himself was a Golden Rule incarnate. It was not because he spoke the Beatitudes that they heard him gladly. It was because his life was a Beatitude. It was not because he taught in beautiful parables that they loved him. It was because the spirit of his life touched them with vital inspiration.

It may well be doubted whether Jesus told the Samaritan woman anything new. It was a common saying "that God is a spirit and must be worshipped in spirit." But what thrilled her was his personality (imagine Emerson talking to an eager country lad!). She felt the sweetness of spirit, the tenderness of look, the graciousness of manner: no wonder she declared that she had found the Messiah! As Matthew Arnold stated: "What was

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wanted was a fuller description of righteousness,"—an embodiment of spiritual righteousness in an actual life. This "description of righteousness" Jesus presented to her in his own personality.

Thus, Jesus created a new era by illustrating a new order of manhood. It is not an impropriety that our calendar commemorates his name and fame. Every great master founds a new type: the dome of Brunelleschi in architecture, the opulent genius of Raphael in painting, Gutenberg with his first printed book, Pitt by his official integrity creating a new era in the civil service of England, John Howard illustrating a new method of philanthropy. The first railroad began a revolution, not only in the traffic and travel, but in the civilization of the world: it was the application of a new motive power to human affairs. So likewise, the character of Jesus began a reorganization of human life, individual and corporate,—it was the application to the springs and sources of conduct of new motives: sentiments that easily move men along all the

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pathways of service. Just because he introduced into the world a new type of moral architecture, a new agency for the education and guidance of the soul,—a character that was a masterpiece of moral genius,—Jesus rebuilt the ideals and re-created the motives of mankind.

Now, what were the essential and distinguishing elements of the new order of manhood which Jesus exemplified in his personality? What was there in his character that made him a creative historical influence? As near as we can comprehend it or describe it, the new order of manhood which Jesus illustrated may be briefly though inadequately defined in these words: *the all-sufficiency of Inner Life*. The Kingdom of God understood as the life of the soul: purity its condition, growth its method, love its motive, service its expression, character its fruitage. Heart-life issuing in helpfulness. This is what Jesus actually realized in his own personality; and because he realized it supremely, he became the master of all hearts, lifting them up to God and moving them to godliness.

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Jesus was artist of the Inner Life. He looked *in* not *out* for strength; and then he went abroad to spend himself in service for others. He built his kingdom, not on the circumstantial, but on the spiritual, elements of life. Not the power of allies but of his manhood must suffice. With him everything was "as natural as life;" about him a wilderness of artificial piety. With him a desire to impart to others the life which he possessed; about him men sought to enrich themselves by impoverishing others. With him an all-embracing love flowing out to the whole world in an unrestricted brotherhood; about him sympathy and kindness as narrow as creed or race or clan. With him a supreme reverence for the moral intuitions of his own heart leading to spiritual worship of the Father, over all and in all; about him a reverence for names and places, forms and traditions, bringing more tears than smiles, more dread than joy. A new type of character, indeed!

These contrasts between the common ambitions of men in the olden time and

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the character of Jesus are numerous and radical; and they explain his power and prominence in history. Here a man trying to be a saint by a dull monotony of formal ceremonies. There Jesus, independent of forms, but living a life grander than any ideal of oriental priest or Greek philosopher. Here a Roman fired by the passion for world-wide dominion. There Jesus an incomparable character, satisfied with the kingdom of God within his own heart, and destined to rule the world from his throne of love long after the last Roman had passed away. Here a rich young man in the pride of his large possessions, that after all never satisfied the yearning of the spirit for eternal life. There Jesus with a spiritual wealth incorruptible and eternal, which did not enslave him and load him with cares, but which enabled him to win others to the good life, and in this way multiplying their joys. Here a Pharisee, learned in the lore of the schools and trying to serve God by spinning a cobweb of theological speculations remote from the vital concerns of human life. There

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Jesus, with a wisdom that touches the heart because drawn from the depths of his own soul, and he proclaims a message that gives infinite gladness because it gives abundant life.

The Greeks had an order of manhood that was the worship of Beauty. The Romans had an order of manhood that was the worship of Power. The spirit of man had sought its salvation among the affairs of the world and the incidents of material things. And the spirit of man was not satisfied. In the personality of Jesus was presented a new order of manhood; the elaboration of Beauty and Power within, *the all-sufficiency of Inner Life.*

The common Jewish ideal had been a somewhat external *conformity* of life to the law of righteousness. Jesus presented to the world a personality *informed* with the spirit of love that made righteousness an easy habit of life. Henceforth men cherished a new ideal of excellence and grew under the inspiration of his spirit into a new service and a new peace. The

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abundance of Inner Life makes all rules and regulations unnecessary: Love is the fulfilling of the law. Thus it was that Jesus by the power of his personality founded a new order of manhood among men; and for this he must ever be held in most grateful and loving reverence.

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TOPICS TREATED

1. Some Objections to these Claims.
2. Fears respecting Gospel Criticism.
3. Importance of the Problem.
4. What is Gospel Criticism?
5. Based on Facts in the Records.
6. Constructive, not Destructive.
7. Leads to better use of Gospels.
8. How the Story of Jesus began.
9. Growth and Character of the Synoptics.
10. The Fourth Gospel.
11. A Theological Treatise about Jesus.
12. Conclusions must be frankly accepted.
13. Some Negative Results.
14. Gains greater than losses.
15. Jesus less mystical but more Real.
16. New Beauty in the Birth Stories.
17. Accounts of the Resurrection.
18. How more Historical.
19. Greater Proofs of the Supremacy of Jesus.

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It will doubtless be felt by some readers that the views of Jesus just presented and the claims in his behalf just made are erroneous, because they assume that the Gospels are precisely what the creeds of the church have represented them to be, whereas it has been discovered that the creeds are at fault, and these writings are not at all what theologians claimed them to be. Indeed the objection is stoutly urged by some scholars that, as the traditional belief respecting the Gospels as absolutely accurate accounts is untrue, therefore the estimate of Jesus just given is unsound and unhistorical. These critics contend that all such praise of Jesus is mere pious sentiment, with no basis in reality, because recent Biblical science leaves the pages of the Gospels destitute of historical authority.

This objection is sufficiently serious to

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deserve examination, although it touches only a part of the foregoing statement respecting the historical significance of Jesus. We must frankly consider this problem. It is one that no intelligent person can afford to ignore. If Gospel Criticism has made Jesus a shadowy and uncertain figure, the world of religion ought at once to take account of such a momentous fact. We cannot afford to imperil our religious hopes and ideals by closely associating them with mere fictions. If the Gospels are so imperfect that they afford no real historical material for a veritable life of Jesus, the sooner we adjust our religious faith to the fact the better. If, on the other hand, these writings, when subjected to the most searching scientific investigation, show themselves to be of the very greatest historic worth, though of a different quality than that long attributed to them by creed makers, this important fact we need as an aid, not only to love of Jesus, but to faith in spiritual verities. However unwelcome the task, and however we may shrink from so seri-

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ous an undertaking, nevertheless the question must be faced and answered: In what new light does modern Gospel Criticism place Jesus?

It is clear enough, as all freely admit, that the name, "Jesus," has played a mighty part in the world's history for nearly two thousand years. But today, large numbers of earnest men and women fear that, in spite of all this, the discoveries of recent years have cast so many doubts upon the accuracy of the Gospels, that we cannot be sure about the things, until recently universally accepted. There is a terrible dread gripping at the hearts of many Christians in these days, throughout the countries affected by modern culture. It is the apprehension that we may have to give up our loved Master, and put the story of his life away among the beautiful but unreal creations of human fancy. At least, it is feared that the character of the man, who bore the name of Jesus, has been so far moved from solid reality into the realm of legend, and so immersed in uncertainty, that he can no longer be to

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us a real historical person, to love as a friend and revere as a teacher.

The only satisfactory course for us to pursue, in this time of bold inquiry, is to examine carefully what has actually been done to throw light upon the origin and character of the Gospels. When we have in hand all the discoveries that Gospel Criticism can furnish us, then we must address ourselves to the problem: Have these writings become useless as reports of the life of Jesus, now that they have been subjected to the searching scrutiny of scientific research? Are our authorities so imperfect that Jesus fades out of real history into mere dreamland? This is not a mere academic problem. It is vastly more than a trivial matter of literary criticism. The very basis of our Christian life is involved in this discussion. As we love the truth we must see what the facts in this particular realm really are. As we love Jesus, we must listen to the critics to discover whether that love is justified by the facts. Our appreciation of Jesus must be an appreciation that can maintain

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itself in the light of discovery. Now, the only way to solve this momentous problem is to lay hold of the facts. Let us then look squarely and courageously at the situation before us.

A careful application of the scientific method of investigation to the Gospels has led to certain discoveries of great importance respecting the processes by which they were produced. And these discoveries in turn help us to understand in what way and how far these writings are historical. The scientific method is as applicable to historical documents as to physical phenomena. It is simply an earnest and exhaustive search for facts, and an interpretation of facts to find causes and laws.

Just as the physicist or biologist observes and experiments to discover realities, not imposing his opinions but allowing Nature to tell its own story, so the scientific student of the Gospels observes carefully all the facts which they contain. He tries to understand the meaning and relation of these facts, so that he may gain an insight

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into the laws underlying them. In this way he learns the method by which they were produced; he traces the influences which worked to create them; and he discovers the character which belongs to their different parts.

In other words, the modern Biblical student lets the Gospels tell their own story. He abandons mere tradition; he surrenders all prepossessions; he represses his own desires and wishes; he seeks the exact facts; he stands aside that Reality may speak. If the conclusions reached differ from the teachings of ancient writers, it is because the facts in the Gospels themselves compel him to hold these conclusions. These modern views are not due to the sympathy of the friends or the imagination of the foes of the Bible and religion. They are the discoveries reached by a careful, prolonged, and reverent study of the Gospel facts. They are the conclusions of the exploring and interpreting reason, scientific inductions which rest upon the phenomena presented by these documents themselves.

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As might be expected, the scientific study of these writings (aided by all the other historical facts so far known that bear upon this problem) has led to new theories respecting their date, authorship, method of production, and general character. That important discoveries would be made as soon as the Gospels were studied in the scientific spirit is a result that might reasonably have been anticipated. As scientific research has revolutionized our ideas of plant and animal, of star and rock; as scientific historical investigations have changed our views respecting many social and political matters, extending our knowledge of customs and institutions and giving us new conceptions of the evolution of the human race, it is evident that the same method, when applied to the Gospels, would throw a flood of light upon them, discrediting many old notions about them and revealing their true origin and character.

We must always bear in mind, what is so often forgotten:—

(1) That these new conclusions are based upon the facts that the Gospels

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themselves furnish. The conservative divine often meets the scientific student with the objection: "What right have you to set aside the ancient traditions of the church? Who gave you authority to sit in judgment upon the creed of Christendom? Have you not spun these theories out of your too ardent fancies? How absurd for you to claim to have found these facts in the Gospels, for thousands of scholars as keen as you have read these pages for centuries, and they have not seen what you pretend to have discovered. Is it possible that they have all been blind and that only you have eyes to see the truth?"

The reply which the scientific student makes to this representative of tradition is similar to that which the discoverer in chemistry makes to those who deny his report of what he has found in Nature. As the chemist says: Nature furnishes in the researches of my laboratory these facts which warrant my conclusions; so the student of the Gospels says: By paying attention to the facts in these documents, I arrive at my conclusions. The facts

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themselves are more authoritative than the mere opinions of the ancient churchmen. And it is no more remarkable that men have read the Gospels for ages and missed seeing many of the truths scattered over their pages, than it is that other men looked for ages at trees and stones but never saw the plainest facts which they contain!

(2) It must also be borne in mind that these new views are not really destructive but constructive. They are not harmful but helpful to the cause of piety. The Gospels cannot be destroyed by their own facts. Religion cannot be injured by the truth. The sun is not dishonored by the astronomer who looks into his face and discovers the spots that mottle his countenance! The great spiritual truths of the Gospels cannot be discredited by the reverent criticism that deals with their own facts, even if human imperfection is traced in those pages. The discoveries of Biblical scholars may set aside the erroneous claims made by churchmen in behalf of the evangelical records. But no harm can come

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to them, to Jesus, or to the real cause of piety from the facts which they contain or from the scientific conclusions of scholars based upon them.

Discoveries about the structure of the Sermon on the Mount cannot set aside the Beatitudes. If these Beatitudes were spoken on different occasions rather than at the same time, their truth and beauty are not thereby impaired. A new view of Jesus's relation to the Messianic Hope cannot lessen the purity of his life or the pathos of his death. A fresh insight into the poetical character of the stories that cluster about his birth cannot weaken our admiration for the teacher who showed boundless sympathy for the weak and the wayward, and intense severity toward the hypocrites.

(3) However, we must bear in mind another fact of prime importance. These great discoveries do surely necessitate important changes in our uses of the Gospels. Whenever a large truth is discovered, the method of life is revolutionized and mankind is blessed. When we are

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given a great fact, new and central, then the reorganization of civilization begins. Sufficient knowledge to enable us to understand and utilize electricity comes first; and then homes are differently lighted, methods of travel are changed, and the habits of society are transformed. When the relation of disease to germs is discovered and the efficiency of the antiseptic treatment of wounds is proved, then surgery develops with wonderful rapidity.

Respect for facts is the modern spirit. Adjustment of life to reality is the present ambition. Nothing is so beneficently revolutionary as a great fact. Therefore, when we discover just what the Gospel page really is, then old uses of texts will stop, while new and better uses will begin. When guided by this new scholarship, we see at a glance that they are not clubs by which to beat back scientists, nor chains with which to bind the free reason, nor materials of which to build dogmatic creeds. All these are misuses of texts which injure mankind, while they misrepresent the true meaning and real ministry of the Scriptures.

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But on the other hand, new and better uses of texts spring up as we more fully understand the Gospels. We now find in the great sayings which they contain, not fetters for the mind, but fuel for the altar fires of the heart; not chains to bind opinion, but wings to lift the soul; not material out of which to construct dogmas, but prophecies of the heart that enrich the life. We now study the parables for inspiration rather than authority. We now read the Gospels, not to prove miracles and discredit science, but to warm our hearts to heroism, mercy, and self-sacrifice; and so this new use of the Gospels helps us to equip ourselves with the motive power of a nobler life. We discover in these documents, not the report of a mystical transaction that enables us to settle with a Shylock in the skies, but something infinitely better: the dynamic record of a sublime life that purifies us and makes us friends of God, the Father, by making us helpful servants of man, our brother.

The Gospels, when allowed to shine in

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their own light, which is the light of truth and love, lend themselves to a new and higher ministry. We ought to handle them rationally, but reverently, for increase of Inner Life. These pages fire our hearts with ennobling motives, the less we go to them for dogma and the more we use them for communion with One who went about doing good, and who, by so living, showed us the true way of life.

Let us now give attention to some of the most important discoveries that have been made respecting the origin, relation, and character of the writings known to us as the Gospels. This needs to be done that we may prepare ourselves to answer the deeper question: In what respect may we consider the figure of Jesus really historical? We must always keep in mind, as has been stated, that these discoveries have been made by giving careful attention to the facts which these documents themselves contain.

A few of the most important and generally accepted conclusions are these: The first three Gospels—the Synoptics—are the

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outcome of a complex process that began very soon after the crucifixion and continued during periods varying in length for the different Gospels, from forty to sixty years. An oral tradition giving the life and teaching of Jesus, began to take shape at once after his death. This was the story of the Master as set forth by the first preachers. It passed by word of mouth from apostle to convert, from one church to another. As the years went by and this story was told and retold in different places, the tradition assumed somewhat divergent forms in these separate localities, certain parts grew dim, some parts were modified and embellished, and new elements were added, borrowed from a fuller account. The followers of Jesus did the best that they could, but even their best efforts necessarily produced a story with human limitations.

For a time, just these personal memories and oral reports respecting Jesus and his message were all that existed. A very precious and carefully preserved tradition, but yet a tradition, which, being held in

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solution, as we may say, in the minds of the early disciples, was constantly subject to changes of various kinds. We must remember, too, that this story was told, not with a mere prosaic and historical intent, but to win converts, to communicate the spirit of Jesus, to make people believe in him as the Messiah.

Then afterwards attempts were made to commit this tradition to writing. One of the first, probably the very first, to do something of this sort was Matthew, whose little work (which early disappeared, being incorporated in more elaborate documents) was chiefly composed of the "Sayings" of Jesus. It probably underlies the Sermon on the Mount as given in our first canonical Gospel; and in this way it served as the nucleus of that Gospel, and so gave to the fuller and later work that we have the name of *Matthew*. Then Mark, a companion of Peter, wrote out his account of the life of Jesus, paying little attention to the teachings of Jesus, but relating chiefly the incidents of his wonderful career. This work was probably very nearly our second

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Gospel, which bears the name of Mark. But it is quite evident that this first draft of the work lacked certain passages that are now found near the beginning and at the end. The date of this original Mark is approximately the year 75 A. D. The majority of scholars at the present day, consider this the oldest of our four Gospels.

A decade later, about 85 A. D., a man of more literary genius and with wider information, sat down and compiled, out of all the materials at hand, another Gospel document, what we know as the Gospel of Luke. He fortunately describes his aim and method at the very beginning of his work: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative, concerning those things which have been fully established among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye witnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou

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mightest know the certainty of the things that thou wast taught by word of mouth."

From this language it is evident that written accounts of Jesus were numerous when the Gospel of Luke was written. For the author states: "*Many* have taken in hand to draw up a narrative." Among these "many" were undoubtedly, Matthew's "Collection of Sayings," and Mark's "Narrative;" to which reference has just been made. But there were certainly others, which early disappeared. The writer of our Gospel of Luke probably used the oldest of these, while he also borrowed more or less from oral tradition.

Very near the close of the first century, some other writer, following in the footsteps of Luke, constructed another document. This document bears the name of Matthew, because it contains a long collection of Jesus's Sayings, that probably came chiefly from the little work, "Oracles of the Lord," which the apostle Matthew wrote fully a generation before this final edition, or finished narrative, was produced. This last editor also probably took

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materials from Mark and Luke, and quite likely borrowed some from other sources, both oral and written. In this way, the Gospel that stands first in the New Testament, our Matthew, came into its present shape about the year 100 A. D. In it are things that were probably written as early as 65 A. D., while there are others that were not written until thirty years later.

These Gospels, having arisen in this manner, naturally have very much in common; they rest largely upon common sources; hence their remarkable similarities. But there are also marked differences; the same incidents are often differently described, while there are incidents and sayings that are given in one and not in the others. These facts show that the final editors used different authorities, as well as common sources of information. Where the same incident is given in all three, the descriptions often vary as we pass from the earlier to the later document, showing how, in the process of transmission, certain matters grew more and more marvelous.

In some cases we can easily trace this

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poetic enlargement in obedience to the legendary impulse. One example is sufficient illustration: In Mark iii. 10, we read that people pressed upon Jesus to touch him in order to be healed, an impulse not difficult to understand. There is here however no record of cures. But in Matthew ix. 20, the miracle has taken shape: a woman is healed by touching the hem of his garment. While in Luke vi. 19, (Matthew xiv. 36,) the poetic impulse has so expanded the incident that *all* who touch him are healed! Here we can plainly see the miracle grow from a nucleus of fact.

These three Gospels, we must therefore remember, are not biographies that were at once written on the spot by eye witnesses; but they are rather composite memoirs which grew out of the life of the primitive church in its efforts to report the character and enforce the message of Jesus. All the materials in them were first carried for at least twenty or thirty years in memory, and passed by word of mouth as oral tradition from teacher to learner. Certain brief writings by the apostles, or

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those near the Twelve, came later into existence. Just when these appeared, and how many were produced, we cannot tell. Then other more elaborate productions, like Luke and our Matthew (there were probably still others similar to these, such as the lost Gospel of the Hebrews,) grew up under the shaping hands of later editors. This final editorial work was done in the last quarter of the first century, some two generations after the death of Jesus.

The Fourth Gospel, bearing the name of John, stands somewhat by itself. Modern scholars more and more unite in the conclusion that it was not written by the Apostle John, but by some unknown author as late as the year 115 A. D. In the first three Gospels, beside the general purpose to tell the story of Jesus and report his teaching, the special aim is to show that Jesus was the Messiah, and this intent somehow colors much of the material, as in many passages like those in Matthew, where we read: "That it might be fulfilled

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which was spoken by the prophet.”¹ In the Fourth Gospel, the purpose is radically different and distinctly narrower. Of incidents there are few and of parables none. The special aim is to show that Jesus is the incarnation of the Logos, or *Word*, a term of Alexandrian philosophy, widely popular in the eastern countries of the Roman Empire during the first century of the Christian era. This term, Logos, meant an intermediate divine Principle, or Being, operating between Nature and God, and carrying out the creative purpose. The aim of this philosophical writer not only caused him to reshape his historical material somewhat, but it also led him to add his own speculations with a free hand. And this association of Jesus with the theory of the Logos, of which the Fourth Gospel was one literary expression, was the beginning of the movement which ended in the deification of Jesus.

The difference in purpose, just noted,

¹ Matthew I. 22; II. 15; VIII. 17; XII. 17; XIII. 35; XXI. 4.

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may be briefly illustrated by reference to a single point: In the first three Gospels, we start among men, and Jesus is never brought into association with deity as a part of the Godhead. However intimate his fellowship with the Father, Jesus always remains on the human level, conscious of his place among men and of his dependence upon God. In the Fourth Gospel, we start from the depths of the Divine Nature, Jesus is represented as the manifestation of the Logos, or creative agent of the universe, and his self-assertion is here as marked as his humility in the other Gospels. From the miraculous birth of Jesus, *as a man to fulfil the Messianic Hope*—the position of the Synoptics, to Jesus as *the Logos issuing out of the inner being of God in order to recreate the universe*—the central proposition of the Fourth Gospel, is a long step, and it represents a radical movement away from the original views of the first disciples: a complete philosophical transformation of Christianity.

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But the Fourth Gospel is not all of one piece: two currents run through its pages:

1. The fundamental historical tradition, the larger part of which is peculiar to this document, and some of it contradictory to the parallel accounts in the Synoptics. These differences are marked in its descriptions of the call of the apostles, the Last Supper, the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.¹ It is comparatively easy to separate this older historical material from the philosophical additions made to it. If we set aside the passages that refer directly or by implication to the *Logos* or *Word*, especially the opening paragraph, also the passages that present Jesus in the attitude of self-assertion (the "I" passages²), and the long addresses in Chaps. xiv.-xvii., what remains probably constitutes the document (so far as here preserved), which the final writer had in

¹ Compare John I. 35-42 with Matthew IV. 18-22. Also, John XIV. 9-31 with Matthew XXVI. 36-46.

² Such as John V. 19-26; VI. 35-40; VIII. 12-23; XII. 46-50.

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hand and enlarged. This may have come, or a large part of it, from the Apostle John; and so in this way his name passed to the later work which we possess. We find also that, in this fundamental document underlying our present Gospel, the figure portrayed is very nearly the human Jesus of the Synoptics.

2. But the philosophical writer, to whom we owe the Gospel of John in its present shape, set the person of Jesus, as described by the older tradition which he used, in the frame of his philosophical doctrine of the Logos. He made what he felt was a true representation of Jesus, for he believed Jesus to be the manifestation in the flesh of the Logos; but in the words of Reuss, his work is "history transmuted into dogma;" a speculative treatise *about* Jesus, not a portraiture *of* Jesus. In other words, there are two figures here; the historical Jesus, somewhat dimmed by legend, in the older passages; and over and about this human figure is imposed the form of the Logos, superhuman, mystical, colossal. The intro-

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duction, the five verses at the beginning, plainly describe the writer's purpose. He does not start out to write the history of a man. He frankly announces that he proposes to describe a philosophy of creation; and he elevates Jesus to the chief place of activity, not in a human ministry, but in a cosmical drama. So that, as Schürer put it: This Gospel "is far more like the drama of a poet than the work of an historian."

The transitions in the Fourth Gospel from the historical tradition to the theological speculation are so abrupt, and the two portions are so unlike in quality, that it is easy to distinguish them and separate the two classes of material. The long addresses, in Chaps. xiv.-xvii., have no place in the narrative; they are in form (and largely in quality) unlike the teachings of Jesus as given in the Synoptics. They are not the intuitions of a prophet, but the mystical speculations of a philosopher. These discourses contain many noble sentences, and the author aimed to reproduce the story and spirit of

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Jesus with perfect honesty. He wrote what he felt to be true. But we do not deal here at first hand with the mind of Jesus. There are undoubtedly many true glimpses of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, but we must not go to it for an accurate account of his life and teachings. As a whole, it is not the history of a human being, but the dramatization of a philosophy of redemption with Jesus acting the part of the Logos.

This view has now become a widely accepted conclusion of modern scholarship. The gains to religion from it are many. But chief among them is what it does to restore the historical Jesus to us. It enables us to strip off from his figure the obscuring theosophical vestments: the Logos mask that disguised the actual Jesus. Having discovered the true character of this Gospel, we now easily distinguish between its mystical notions and its historical elements, and the real man Jesus is seen in new light. He gains in reality and attractiveness. We no longer hold him responsible for the mysticisms of

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the long addresses. We cease our vain endeavors to establish a harmony between them and the Sermon on the Mount. Gospel Criticism, therefore, helps us to a clearer historical appreciation of Jesus by removing this mask and showing us the true character behind.

Now, what bearing have these numerous and radical discoveries respecting the real character of the Gospels upon our views of Jesus? No treatment of Jesus has scientific validity or spiritual cogency except as these facts are taken into account. We must make our conception of Jesus square with the facts. Our uses of the Gospels must be adjusted to their true character. The physicist who should ignore the correlation of energy, and the biologist who should ignore the law of evolution, would be doing just what religious teachers are now doing who treat the Gospels as though nothing had recently been discovered about them. We must manfully face the facts in religion as everywhere else. We must discriminate our sources of information

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respecting Jesus and use these documents for what they really are.

The preacher, the parent and the Sunday-school teacher must not ignore these recent and important discoveries about the Gospels. If they do, serious injury will be done to religion. A false dogma about Jesus cannot honor him or help mankind. Our interpretation of that great life, to carry comfort and inspiration, must issue from a rational use of these writings. If we attribute to them a fictitious character, if we assume that they are more than what they are and so use them, we shall be following "a false Christ." Religious teaching has already lost the note of reality to a large extent from this cause.

Nothing will drive young people away from the church or foster indifference to religion more effectually than the suspicion that they are being trifled with; that ministers are hedging; that they are not frankly telling their congregation what they have discovered. This suspicion is even now at work to the great injury of

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the church. There is no safety except in facing the situation. No possible change in our conception of Jesus can work such havoc to piety as disloyalty to truth and resort to duplicity. We must not ignore the crucial questions: Have these discoveries made the figure of Jesus more dim and shadowy? Do they leave any basis for a historical Jesus, or do they make Jesus more real and attractive? What changes do they make necessary in our views of Jesus and in our uses of the Gospels themselves?

One thing is certain, and it really represents a gain. It is this: Documents such as reverent scholarship has shown these Gospels to be, are not adequate proofs of miracles, and they do not provide materials for dogma. The reports which they present, however precious and however valuable for certain purposes, are not the testimonies of eyewitnesses written down at once as the events occurred. Many influences were active in those days to color, enlarge, and distort the tradition, and among them these: (1) An ardent Mes-

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sianic Hope which led people to think that certain things had actually happened because it was supposed that they had been predicted by the ancient Hebrew prophets.

(2) A warmth of affection for Jesus which inevitably tended to magnify his acts and glorify his character. (3) A homiletical tendency that freely created parables about him to illustrate his spirit and convey his message, even as he had created parables to set forth his doctrine respecting the Kingdom of God.

This picture-making of the friends of Jesus, who were wonder-loving orientals, worked with honest intent, when, at times, it led them to weave the then current reports of Jesus's life into poetical stories in order to make that life seem more vivid and impressive. We must not look upon the writers and editors of the Gospels as exact annalists; we must not spurn them as falsifiers; we must read their pages with poetic insight, warmed by their ardent love for their Master, although not necessarily accepting all the details of their story. We must remember that the story

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was told, not for its details but for its general impression.

There were other changes introduced into these records through various mistakes: lapses of memory and dullness of mind on the part of hearer and reporter—the gross ear sometimes missing the spiritual meaning. There were also errors that arose through translation from one language to another. Jesus spoke in the popular tongue of his people—Aramaic; we have his story in Greek. All these and other facts respecting the process by which these documents were produced make it clear that we do not have in them evidence adequate to prove the supernatural. And surely what was freely and poetically set forth, in symbol and simile, as a teaching of life, should not be used to construct an elaborate creed to be imposed as a finality upon the human mind. To approach the Gospels for this purpose is to misuse them.

So much for the negative side, and all this seems very destructive at first sight. The problem still presses for some more

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positive solution: In the light of this new truth about the Gospels, does the figure of Jesus grow brighter or become dimmer? Do the Gospels, as at present understood, help us to a clearer view of Jesus as a real historical character? Is there anything more than shadows and superstitions really left? The true answer, stated in briefest terms, seems to be this: The Gospels do become, in the hands of modern scholars, in spite of all apparent losses, both more interesting and more instructive; and in a very true sense more historical.

The figure of Jesus becomes less mystical, but more real. We may not be so sure as our fathers were of some details, but we are more certain of the large and heroic outline. The Gospels, which have indeed become new because seen in a new light, really help us to a fuller understanding and a warmer admiration of Jesus. We are using them to-day more in harmony with the purpose for which they were written,—namely, to communicate his spirit and report his message. They did not

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create Christianity. They were created by the church to perpetuate the image and embody the spirit of its founder.

When we cease to insist upon the infallibility of details, and also cease to quote the texts of the Gospels as absolute authority for dogma, and when we use these writings solely for the great ethical truths which they contain and for the inspiration of the wonderful life which they describe, willing that small matters remain uncertain so long as the central facts shine clear,—then we shall use them aright, and then they will become more fruitful means of grace to us than when they were read in the old spirit.

After destructive criticism has done all that it can, the greatness of Jesus in character and message, not only remains untouched, but the loving appreciation of him as guide and helper to the divine life grows stronger. And this is the one point of importance to religion. The relief of all anxious hearts, who may have feared the results of scientific investigation, is near at hand in the discovery that our

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gains are after all greater than our losses. Some things that once seemed essential, we do lose—legendary incidents respecting marvels or miracles; but the central things remain—the supreme excellence of his life and the sublime quality of his teachings; and these come into new prominence and larger power. For a conclusion, something like this is warranted: Uncertainty increases respecting some incidents of Jesus's life as reported in the Gospels, but the essential quality of his character shines in clearer light and exerts upon us a more helpful influence. We can now make fewer positive assertions about some of the details of his career, but we can assert more confidently and positively than ever before his transcendent greatness as a religious genius. This important proposition will be set forth more in detail in the following chapter.

The general conclusion just stated may not confirm some of our theological opinions: this is however of no great importance. But it does bring Jesus nearer to us as a helpful personal influence; and

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this is the essential element in Christianity. The mystical halo about him may fade, being no more a part of him than is the halo in the sky a part of the sun, but the spiritual beauty of his character increases and his power over our hearts in behalf of righteousness deepens.

Before we make a general application of these principles, let us briefly consider what help they afford us respecting two of the most difficult problems in this connection: the birth stories and the accounts of the resurrection. The conclusions of Gospel Criticism respecting these two subjects when first stated, seem painfully destructive to many people; especially when they are applied to these matters in a cold and negative spirit. When it is said, to discuss the birth stories first, that we cannot now accept as a literal record of historical facts the accounts in Matthew and Luke, which tell of a special star, the visits of angels, and the strange birth; when we are told that this is poetry, beautiful and interesting poetry, but no more than poetry,—then many a heart feels

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chilled and from many a life the light of heaven seems to fade. But a little calm reflection will show us that what we gain by this conclusion is vastly greater than what is lost.

As strange as the statement may seem to some when it is first heard, it is nevertheless true that only as we admit the poetical character of these stories do they become of greatest historic value to us. They most fully reveal the real Jesus when freely read as legends. They most truly demonstrate his greatness as a historical figure, when we interpret them as products of the loving appreciation of his friends, as it sought to express itself in poetic symbols.

What do we really lose and what do we really gain? Let us see. We lose the wonder child as a physical marvel impossible for science to accept; we gain fresh insight into the spiritual influence of Jesus. Religion escapes from the bondage of miracle and enters into new moral power. We lose the outward prodigies that violate natural law; we gain a better

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understanding of the essential quality of the Master's life which gave him, and which continues to give him, marvelous power over human hearts. Religion escapes from the necessity of apology, and it is now able to appeal to the consciences of men free from the handicap of superstition. We lose the song of goodwill as sung by angels in whom the modern mind has ceased to believe; we gain a clear view of the impression which the Prophet of Nazareth made upon his friends. He inspired them to live in the spirit of goodwill. Jesus himself was the supreme choir-master who taught them to sing to the wide world the angelic song of peace through goodwill. Religion escapes from the worship of the mere letter and lays hold of the moral power which the poem symbolizes. And are there not great gains in this change in our point of view and in our use of the Gospel story?

Let us go a little more into particulars. The birth-stories, at the beginning of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, were created by an impulse like that which has produced

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many similar poetical creations, which have grown up around great men; and those that cluster about the name of Buddha especially illustrate this fact. They are attempts to explain, in the symbolism of the age, the origin of a life that seemed to transcend the limits of human nature. They are trustworthy testimonies, not to the reality of certain incidents, but to the quality and magnitude of Jesus's character. His followers saw the beauty and felt the power of his life. They were so greatly helped by him that they felt sure that he had a divine origin. As there were no records to guide them, they freely created incidents to describe what they felt must have been the origin of this extraordinary man.

The incidents that were naturally and honestly invented by their warm oriental hearts, to explain what they felt respecting Jesus, reflected the spirit of his life: this is everywhere the law of the growth of legends. These poetical incidents testify to the profound impression which Jesus made upon them and upon the world.

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These stories contain the explanation which his friends gave to an immense and obvious fact: his wonderful life and influence. They are inadequate as an explanation, but they are invaluable as a revelation of his character, and also as evidence of their loving appreciation. They are not *records* of his childhood, but *products* of his life; not the history of his birth, but symbols of the quality of his ministry. They are the reflections of the spirit of the words and deeds of his manhood thrown by the ardent fancy of his loving followers on the mists of uncertainty enveloping his childhood.

The reader of the Gospels is indeed dull of heart who does not feel the glow of the reverence of Jesus's disciples, and the warmth of their love, expressing themselves through these wonder tales. But duller of mind is he who goes so far astray as to use this poetry for prose, insisting that these particular incidents really happened, and so missing the precious lessons which these stories do contain. They do not really tell the history of Jesus's birth,

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as has just been stated, but they do describe the impression which he made upon the disciples, and the affection which he aroused in them.

What is the story of the virgin birth but a report of the popular feeling in the apostolic time that Jesus was a man so supremely pure that he must have had an unusual origin? What is the story that attributes his paternity to the Holy Spirit but the testimony of his disciples to the spirituality of his life,—an obvious fact which they tried in this way to explain? What is the story of the guiding star but an embodiment of their confidence in him as heaven-sent, because his life was so heavenly? What is the story of the Magi with their gifts but their public declaration of an appreciation so large and tender that they, too, would give all that they possessed to do him honor? What is the story of the angelic chorus heard by the watching shepherds,—“Glory to God in the Highest and Peace on Earth to Men of Goodwill,”—but the description of the blessed ministry which Jesus has actually

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performed for mankind; what the disciples themselves had heard sung on the heights of their own being as they communed with Jesus and grew into his spirit?

The life of Jesus had been preëminently a life of goodwill. Just because this was true, the song of goodwill grew up spontaneously in their hearts and was attributed to the angels. We have here an explanation of the origin and character of Jesus; but it is an explanation made by reverent love, not in logical statements, but in poetical symbols. We are not obliged to accept their explanation. Indeed, we cannot. But their poem is first-class historical material, if rightly used, being complete proof of the quality and extent of Jesus's influence upon them. This is surely a more spiritual and a more scientific use of these birth-stories than the old dogmatists made of them.

We may apply the same method of interpretation to the accounts of the resurrection. But only a hint can here be given of the new meaning which Gospel Criticism finds in the Christophanies, or stories of

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his reappearance after the crucifixion, and only a bare reference can be made to the more spiritual uses to which we may now put these passages. Every year the conclusion gains a wider acceptance among religious scholars that these divergent statements cannot be harmonized; that they do not afford an adequate demonstration of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.¹ Historical science and physical science compel us to surrender the old belief that Jesus's body actually came out of the tomb and that he lived again in the flesh among his friends. All this is evident. But the very fact that the disciples did come to believe in Jesus as risen from the Underworld (not the *grave* but the abode of departed spirits—"raised from the *dead*") and alive at God's right hand is the best possible evidence, not only of the grandeur of his character, but of the immortality of the soul.

What survives all critical analysis and

¹ See Article on "Resurrection" in *Encyclopædia Biblica*, vol. IV.

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scientific objection is the fact that Jesus so lived that he made his friends absolutely sure of his immortality and their immortality. This is historical. We make the best use of the story of the resurrection when we find in it the illustration of that spirituality of life which is the root and spring of our hope of heaven.

The positive gains from Gospel Criticism, making these writings more valuable as evidences of Jesus's spiritual greatness and contributing to a clearer appreciation of him as a historical character, have not received the attention that they deserve. A general discussion of certain phases of this great problem will be given, as has already been stated, in the next chapter, but two important facts will here be briefly presented.

The Messianic intent of the first three Gospels is evident. They were written to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and the incidents of his life were poetically enlarged in this direction by ardent belief in him as the chosen Servant of God. Gospel Criticism by pointing out

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this tendency and by designating just what embellishments in the records are due to it, enables us to put aside these elements. And as we remove these disguising vestments from the figure of Jesus, we are able to see him more nearly as he was. We gain a more accurate historical view of Jesus as we set aside the less trustworthy parts in these documents. This is precisely what historical science does in its treatment of all the great characters of the race. The figure of King Alfred gains in historical reality and our appreciation of him increases, as historical students separate fact from fiction in our sources of information.

What is true of the first three is equally true of the Fourth Gospel. Indeed, it was written with a more conscious and deliberate purpose to prove a thesis: That Jesus is the Logos incarnate in the flesh for the redemption of man. When we recognize this dogmatic purpose at work in its pages, and when we understand just what the philosophy of the Logos was, which the writer was imposing upon Jesus,

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then it is easy to lay our hands upon this and that statement in the Fourth Gospel, and say: This is not a description of Jesus, but only a description of the sincere belief of the author about Jesus. This separation between what is historical fact and what is speculative addition is the object of Gospel Criticism. The Gospel is not discredited by the procedure, but simply better understood. What is done is not destructive but constructive. The result achieved represents a gain rather than a loss. Jesus becomes more real, more lovable, and more helpful, as these obscuring notions about him are put in their proper place.

But there is a greater gain here than the mere rescuing of the figure of Jesus from the obscuring vestments of Messianic Hope and Logos philosophy, by which he was clothed, and to that extent misrepresented. Gospel Criticism shows us how these tendencies worked and what parts of the story as we have it were produced by these forces. But beyond this there is a still more important truth. Jesus was

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not the Messiah foretold by the Hebrew prophets, *but the fact that the disciples believed in him as such is the greatest possible evidence of his spiritual greatness.*

We cannot accept all that their earnest faith in him as the Messiah came to ascribe to him, but that faith as it shines across the Gospel page is a fact of supreme significance. We can account for it, and for the moral revolution which it produced in their lives, for it lifted them toward what he was, only as we assume the sublime magnitude and spirituality of the character of Jesus.

Here is a flash of light by which Gospel Criticism illuminates the person of Jesus, bringing him into clearer view as a supremely great and inspiring character. Their faith in him as the Messiah demonstrates his messianic proportions. And the quality of that faith, what it enabled them to be and do (all these things stand out clear in the light of history),—reveals the quality and spirit of Jesus, their beloved Master. So that, while Gospel Criticism points here and there and says:

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These things are legendary additions due to a strong belief in his Messiahship; it does not stop here, but it goes on to show that this very belief and the poetic embellishments which it created, prove, not only the greatness of Jesus, but also reveal the quality of his greatness. There must have been something supremely attractive in Jesus or men never would have come to believe in him as the Messiah, especially as he disappointed all the popular and worldly expectations respecting the coming Servant of God. Moreover, their love for him as the Messiah would never have refined and ennobled their own hearts, as we know that it did, had not Jesus himself been a refining and ennobling personality.

What is true of the belief in Jesus as the Messiah is also true of the effort of philosophy, as displayed in the Fourth Gospel, to make him the manifestation of the Logos among men. That theory of the Logos cannot be made to harmonize with the real universe as revealed by modern science. We cannot for a moment accept the statement that Jesus was the

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Logos made flesh. It is perfectly clear that in the Fourth Gospel we have a dogmatic setting of the life of Jesus which is not historical, and which we cannot accept as real.

But what then? Shall we stop at this conclusion? If we do, we shall miss the chief lesson of Gospel Criticism and the supreme truth of greatest spiritual value to us. And what is that truth? Just this: The fact that philosophers felt impelled to call Jesus the Logos is the very highest tribute to his character. The theory of the Logos implies divine proportions; that men invested Jesus with this theory, proves that to them he seemed to have these divine proportions. When they said: Jesus is that Logos,—they paid him superlative honors. Their theory of the universe may be erroneous, but their act reveals a loving reverence which has great historic value. It does not prove Jesus to be the Logos, but it does reveal and demonstrate the impression that he had made upon the world.

The Fourth Gospel, is, therefore, of

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immense importance, not because it gives us a photographic or phonographic reproduction of the career and message of Jesus, which it does not do, but because it shows both the magnitude and the quality of his life. The author would not have put Jesus on this high throne of creativeness, had he not found in the story of his life spiritual attributes which made him seem worthy of the part in creation assigned to the Logos. The estimate may have been unwarranted, but it was an estimate which did exist. This is the important contribution of Gospel Criticism: It does not confirm all the details of the document before us; it decisively attributes some to mere speculation; but it goes back of the Gospel page to the motive of the author who wrote it; and in this way it finds new and irresistible proof of the spiritual greatness of the Master.

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This was the greatness of Jesus Christ. He felt, as no other felt, a union of mind with the human race, felt that all had a spark of that same intellectual and immortal flame which dwelt in him. I insist on this view of his character, not only to encourage us to aspire after a likeness to Jesus, I consider it as peculiarly fitted to call forth love toward him. If I regard Jesus as an august stranger, belonging to an entirely different class of existence from myself, having no common thoughts or feelings with me, and looking down upon me with only such a sympathy as I have with an inferior animal, I should regard him with a vague awe; but the immeasurable space between us would place him beyond friendship and affection. But when I feel that all minds form one family, that I have the same nature with Jesus, and that he came to communicate to me, by his teaching, example, and intercession, his own mind, to bring me into communion with what was sublimest, purest, happiest in himself, then I can love him as I love no other being, excepting only him who is the Father alike of Christ and of the Christian.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

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During the past few years the scientific investigations of many Biblical scholars have led to the discovery of the true character of the Gospels; and some of these important facts have been stated in the previous chapter. During the next few years a scientific appreciation of these facts will lead us to a clearer understanding of the character of Jesus and a more spiritual use of the story of his life. At present there is much neglect of the Gospels and much confusion respecting the person and ministry of Jesus.

These statements may seem strange and untrue to many persons. And in opposition it may be asked: Are not millions of children and young people studying the New Testament literature in our Sunday-schools? Very true. But all thoughtful educators testify that young people are becoming more and more ignorant of the

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Bible. And even if Scripture is extensively studied, in a way, these conclusions of Gospel Criticism are, unfortunately, generally ignored in the work of religious education. The church is far more willing to accept modern views of the Old Testament than of the New Testament. It is common also to find the minister in the pulpit advocating modern views of the Bible while the Sunday-school of the same church is given over to traditional dogmatism. Moreover, those who accept these discoveries of Biblical science are very slow to apply them and make the necessary reconstruction of religious thought, especially in the training of the young.

As long as this condition lasts the new interest in Jesus will not appear. And deep, vital interest in Jesus is far less common than many suppose. It will not grow into a commanding enthusiasm until the church takes a more scientific attitude toward the Gospels. Not until a more rational attitude is taken toward Jesus. Then a rebirth of Christianity will come. There are some hopeful signs which indicate the approach of this great event!

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We may therefore confidently expect that in time, we shall reinterpret the evangelical material and reapply it to human life. We shall find new instruction in that material and new inspiration in the life of Jesus. It is certain that Jesus will not fade from history nor will he cease to influence the world; but he will become historical in a new and grander sense, while his influence will become more personal and more ethical.

Let us briefly consider the direction and method of that progress in religious thought which will issue from a new interpretation of the Gospels. We may well begin with a reference to the "cures" reported to have been performed by Jesus. The one fact which shines through all the pages of the Gospels is this, the curative influence of Jesus; this fact is fundamental in these records. However criticism may cast doubt upon the accounts of particular "miracles of healing;" whatever position we may take under the leadership of science in opposition to "supernatural cures," still it is evident that Jesus did exercise a

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wonderful healing power upon persons sick in body and morbid in mind. It is not strange that he should have done this. It is just what we might expect. When we call to mind what constantly happens about us; when we consider the mechanism and relation of body and soul; and when we remember what peculiar conditions then existed, it is entirely rational to assume that a great spiritual genius would work cures upon the sick people about him.

The Gospels do not enable us to tell just what did really happen in certain cases,—the original fact is beyond recovery, for the record is, in many instances, very brief and imperfect, while the enlargement of legend often obscures the actual occurrence. But an immense personality shines through, even if the incidents are dim. The effects produced, however enlarged by legend, report and reveal a great character. And the moral quality of that character is more evident than the details of the cures. The ethical superiority is revealed in the restraint which Jesus put upon these “powers” which he possessed. He did not

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use them to secure compensation, to obtain notoriety, to enforce his claims, to give authority to his message, or to win disciples. "Go tell no man," was his frequent command. He also seemed to understand that the curative influence was as much in the psychic condition, in the expectancy of the patient, as in himself, for he said to the woman: "Thy faith (not *my power*) hath made thee whole."

The general conclusion which we reach is this: We to-day admit frankly that we cannot tell just what actually happened in many of these cases, and what seems miraculous is evidently due to legend or would be easily explained if we had a complete account. And yet, the facts all point to a character of supreme sanity and vast spiritual nobility.

One needs a clear eye and a firm hand in order wisely to treat this difficult and delicate subject. It is easy to overlook the central truth and miss the spiritual inspiration. The dogmatist aggressively contends for the supernaturalism apparently recorded in these accounts, seeing nothing

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of the character shining through and alienating all men of scientific spirit who listen. On the other hand, it is easy to say that Jesus was merely another *healer*. But this view stops short with one of the minor incidents of his career upon which he himself laid no emphasis. If he had been just this and nothing more, no great spiritual movement would have flowed from his word and work. If this had been all, he would have been the sensation of the day. He would not have been the Master of the ages.

Some dismiss the problem by saying: These are only legends to which sensible men need give no attention. But the halo in the sky means a great sun beyond. Legendary accounts? Yes to some extent. But such poetry only concerns itself with very great personages. Moreover, the ethical spirit working in the legend reveals the sublime character behind. So that if rightly handled these stories of healing, historical after all in a very real sense, demonstrate the magnitude and quality of Jesus's manhood, although they do not,

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with fulness or accuracy, narrate the precise incidents of his life.

The attitude of Jesus to the Messianic Hope illustrates the same important truth. This Hope was, in his day, a varied, fluctuating, but ardent political passion with marked religious elements. It was the Time-Spirit of the Jews of that age. It is always true that a man to become an inspiring leader must be the oracle or agent of a powerful popular sentiment. It is some such widespread enthusiasm that is the throne from which he exercises authority. Whoever should be able to impress and liberate the Jews in that age would have to relate himself to this ideal and utilize the power at work in the hearts of the people under the banner of this great expectation.

A great man could no more arise and labor successfully in Palestine two thousand years ago and ignore the Messianic Hope than could a Lincoln ignore the anti-slavery sentiment of his day. In both cases the overmastering popular sentiment provided the platform on which to stand and

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— the motive power by which to conquer. It was inevitable that Jesus should associate himself with the popular desire for a Deliverer. That he felt himself to be the Messiah of Israel is evident. We frankly acknowledge that we cannot trace the origin and growth of this conviction in his mind. We cannot explain all that he meant by the term or describe all that he believed about himself in this connection. The modern scholar cannot indulge, like his predecessors, in definite assertions and precise descriptions at this point. The records are so imperfect that great uncertainty will always surround the matter.

But about one thing—and that is the one thing of most importance—there is no uncertainty: Jesus reinterpreted the Messianic Hope, and gave it a supremely ethical character. He touched what was a temporary political passion, and it became a permanent spiritual influence. He had the genius and ability to lay hold of this popular sentiment, and reshape, refine, and — reapply it. He claimed to be the Messiah, but in a new and higher sense. He purified

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the Hope and gave it a spiritual quality and a universal application. He did not fulfill the old Hebrew predictions—(about which great misconceptions still survive in the popular mind); he transcended them, being a Messiah after a new and original pattern.

The divinity of Jesus is not to be proved, after the fashion of the old apologists, by showing that he was just what Isaiah and the other Hebrew prophets had foretold respecting a future Messiah. His real divinity is revealed in the fact that he was vastly superior to the ancient ideals. He said in substance: "I am your Messiah, not to drive out the Romans from the land, but to drive out sins from your hearts; not to establish a political organization, but to spread abroad a new spirit of life; not to subjugate your enemies, but to teach the forgiveness of enemies; not to enable you to rule, but to teach you to serve. I am the Messiah, but my mission is to show you by my own death how to save your life by losing it! I bring you a cross, not a sceptre; a yoke to bear, not a throne to

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occupy. I come to establish an eternal kingdom of love." However scant and imperfect the records, this doctrine of Jesus respecting his mission is perfectly clear and historical, and just this is all that is really valuable and essential.

The important contribution of Gospel Criticism to vital Christianity lies in the fact that it makes us surer than ever before of the great central truth just stated, while it relieves us at the same time of many perplexities inherent in the old view of verbal infallibility. We cease to care for accuracy of mere details, because we hold firmly in hand the supreme moral excellence of Jesus.

Moreover, if it be true that Jesus really expected to return in a short time after his death to set up a new and holy form of society, his mistake about this matter does not discredit his moral teaching. The ethics of Plato are not discredited by his erroneous views about the solar system. The — Gospels fail to make entirely clear Jesus's position at this point, but it is clear that he did not lose his hold, whatever his

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opinion on this subject may have been, upon the great central truths of the spiritual life. His authority respecting the cosmos may fade, but his authority respecting the primacy of love does not lessen!

The world is fortunately growing into a keener appreciation of the intellectual greatness of Jesus. But here, as elsewhere, there is great uncertainty respecting some matters, together with a certainty equally great respecting others. How Jesus obtained his education, how much Jewish "learning" he possessed, whether he really held the popular views of his time about disease and demoniacal possession,—on these and other similar subjects it is impossible to reach any clear and positive conclusions.

There is, however, abundant evidence to show that Jesus was a man of remarkable mental powers. He certainly knew the Hebrew Scriptures thoroughly. He could not only quote the Old Testament freely, but he could use its texts with great insight and independence. His method of

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handling Scripture was masterful. He was familiar with its words, but he was a free interpreter of them; reverent toward its teachings, but no slave to its texts; never indulging in fanciful allegory and never resorting to mere verbal dogmatism; finding in these writings illustration and inspiration, but never allowing them to overmaster his own reason and conscience.

With the genius of a poet and the insight of a philosopher, Jesus distinguished between kernel and husk in the precepts of the Law and the pleadings of the Prophets; and by an interpretation all his own, he set forth with beauty and power the essential spiritual truths of Scripture. His vast superiority as an interpreter, his intellectual greatness as a teacher, are convincingly shown when we turn from him to the work of the rabbis as seen in the Talmud; or even to the labored arguments of the Apostle Paul.

The freedom with which Jesus moved among men and handled deep and difficult subjects, his surprising readiness on all occasions, and his mastery of every prob-

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lem of practical ethics presented,—all these things reveal an acuteness and comprehensiveness of thought to which the world as yet has given but inadequate recognition. He illustrates independence without singularity, force without arrogance, originality without exaggeration, capacity of defense without petulance, a popular gift free from artifice. He moves among enemies without fear, and handles difficulties without effort as one conscious of abundant strength. He holds an even balance in conduct and teaching, as only a giant can do; unworldly but not an ascetic; a lightning flash that withers sin, and a boundless sympathy that wins sinners; an undying enthusiasm, but never running to waste in foolish and visionary enterprise.

The intellectual greatness of Jesus is also clearly seen in two sets of circumstances. (1) The way in which he meets his enemies; the quick penetration to the working of their minds, the clear comprehension of the problem at issue, the firm grasp upon the whole situation before him; the rapidity of decision respecting his own

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defense, the effective popular quality of his treatment of the matter in dispute, the high level upon which he always plants himself.

(2) Jesus was equally remarkable in another direction. The casual remarks which he dropped on apparently trivial occasions, he made so weighty with the wisdom of life that they remain influential guides to conduct. Taken all in all, we to-day can find or make no better rules of life than those described in his teachings. He laid hold of the universal element in the passing incident. What he said to the rich young man: "One thing thou lackest," and to the accusers of the wayward woman: "He that is without sin let him cast the first stone;" his reference to the children, and to the widow and her offering—these illustrate his wonderful superiority in this respect. Here we deal with transcendent intellectual ability as well as remarkable moral insight.

We have in the Gospels some two hundred "sayings," and about twenty-five "parables." Gospel Criticism shows us that, in all probability, some of these teachings

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have undergone certain modifications, and a few have been so changed that the thought of Jesus is probably obscured or lost. In the process of oral transmission and editorial revision some misunderstandings naturally arose. But the record is undoubtedly substantially accurate.

The significant fact is that we have this large body of teachings at all. It is often said, in a tone that implies discredit or uncertainty: Jesus himself wrote nothing. Very true; he wrote nothing on parchment. But to have done that would have been an easy matter. What he did accomplish was vastly greater and incomparably more significant. He impressed these spiritual truths so powerfully upon the hearts of men that they fixed themselves there as seeds of life. It is easy enough simply to say things, but to say things so that people make our words a rule of life,—that is the evidence and test of greatness. The sayings set forth by Jesus were indeed seeds of life, so vital with truth, and planted with such dynamic power in the hearts of people, that they became authoritative com-

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mandments. They not only stuck in memory, they became sources of a new life.

Here is the remarkable fact: That his teachings touch the centers of life and remain there with permanent regenerative power. They were treasured by people in their hearts as a precious and persuasive guide to conduct. Jesus put them into the human soul in such a way that the hearers said: This is what I must be! Each word has been a storage battery of inexhaustible spiritual vitality. This could be possible only as these teachings were set forth by a transcendent personality. They were first lived out in the lives of his disciples and then written out in the Gospels. They do not make clear the incidents of his daily life, but they do make clear the quality and spirit and power of that life.

If anyone doubts the truth of this argument, let him go out some morning and see if he can say one word to his friends that will be so strong, so pure, so noble, that they will enshrine it in their hearts and make it a rule of life! He will soon realize the difficulty of saying anything that will

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even be remembered, much less put into life.

The arrow deeply imbedded in the forest tree proves the strength of the arm which drew the bow that put it there. So the many sayings of Jesus, imbedded in the hearts of men and abiding there as ideals and motives of life, prove the vast spiritual power of the teacher who spoke them. They were, indeed, like winged arrows dipped in love, flying forth from a heart of love, and piercing other hearts to make them loving.

The French voyageurs who first ascended the St. Lawrence River had a remarkably interesting experience. The unbroken forest came down to the water's edge on both sides. Every stroke of their oars carried them near to dangerous rocks hidden in the stream or to more dangerous savages lurking in the underbrush. Every mile laboriously gained against the swift current opened before them a new landscape. What charm of discovery! What excitement of constant peril! What alluring prospects far ahead! What fascinating

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anticipation respecting the unexplored regions at the head waters of the mighty River!

And yet, though their eyes had not seen that country and no satisfactory description of it had been given them, they could be sure of some of its important features and characteristics. There must be a far-spread watershed to make such a river possible. It must be forest-clad because the water was clear and fresh. There must be a great lake, or several lakes, to serve as equalizing reservoirs, because the banks indicated little variation in the volume of the stream. All this and more was perfectly evident.

If we locate ourselves anywhere in the old Roman empire during the second quarter of the second century, we shall realize that a spiritual stream is sweeping past us. It runs through the home and purifies and blesses it, by bringing parents into nobler relations with each other and children under a tender watch-care. It runs through the neighborhood, and human lives are knit together in a new brother-

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hood of service. It runs through the market place, and buyer and seller treat each other with new consideration. It runs through the temples of the old gods, and it sweeps people away from the bloody altars; they drop their sacrifices and group themselves in a new worship, where men and women, bound in the bonds of a common love, praise a Father who is love. It runs through shop and field, and leads to a new conduct between master and slave. It runs through the great company gathered to witness the cruelties of the arena, and here and there men rise up and go out, vowing never again to look upon such a brutal show. It runs through the schools of the philosophers, and speculation centers on a new object and gives a more spiritual interpretation to the universe. Wherever it runs through human hearts, it emancipates from selfishness and enriches with holier ideals and brighter hopes.

The stream is there in the clear light of history; a powerful and purifying current. It is a tidal wave of personal influence. Other such streams have swept

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through human society, but this is peculiarly powerful and regenerative. Not everything in it comes from Jesus of Nazareth; tributaries have flowed in by the way. But Jesus really created the current, he gave it momentum and character.

We may set aside the Gospels, and yet the wide spread and wonderful phenomenon here described is itself enough to convince us that back there in Galilee a supreme life was lived that stirred men with love and hope as no one else has done.

Just as the explorers of the St. Lawrence river could be absolutely sure of many features of the inland region, so we may be absolutely sure of the spiritual quality and vast personality of Jesus from the vital currents at work in that old world and associated with his name. While some details of the life story have become in recent years less certain, Jesus himself becomes really more historical than ever before. Though less sure of some incidents of the story, we are a hundredfold more sure of the ethical quality and spiritual grandeur of his character. Any scientific

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explanation of the facts necessitates this conclusion. And this is the only vital concern of religion.

But here an objection is raised by some persons to the views just presented. We are told, by many earnest but conservative people, that the merely Historical Jesus is too vague and distant a figure to give mankind the spiritual help that is needed. These persons admit that it is well to pay some attention to the facts of his human career and to trace his influence in history as a great character; but this alone is not sufficient. They insist that religion must have a Celestial Christ, not only as a personal friend who is constantly present to guide, inspire, and comfort, but as a mediator who supernaturally and instantaneously rescues the sinner from damnation and opens before him the door of heaven. The Jesus of Gospel Criticism, however interesting as a human being, is nevertheless *a mere man*; and as a mere man he can never redeem a sinful world. The Historical Jesus is, they contend, a shadowy figure, who cannot stir the heart to repentance or

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equip the soul with saving faith. To ignore the celestial ministry of Jesus in mediating between offended Justice and fallen man, to leave out the sacrificial element, is to rob the story of Christ of all redemptive power.

The sacrificial interpretation of Jesus's life, has, indeed, occupied a prominent place in Christian theology. The thoughts of many even now never go beyond "the sacrificial Christ." That the Son of God should come down from heaven and die to rescue sinners from eternal misery, that he should suffer infinite agony on the cross "to enable God to be just and justify the ungodly," this is certainly a story that appeals powerfully to human hearts. This doctrine of the cross, from one point of view flashes with the wrath of God and strikes terror to the hearts of sinners, but from the other side it shines with infinite pity and opens to terrified sinners a glorious highway into heaven.

The attractiveness of this doctrine to many minds is evident. But earnest souls are asking: Is this the story of Jesus

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which the Gospels actually tell when illuminated by the discoveries of modern scholarship? Is this the view of Jesus that fits into the universe that science reveals? Is this the thought of Jesus that brings him most powerfully into human life as a creative ethical influence? In fact, is this the true appreciation of the actual Jesus in the light of the discoveries made respecting Nature and the Gospels? These deep questions are now up for discussion. They must be treated with tender reverence, perfect sincerity, and scientific precision.

It goes without saying that our appreciation of Jesus must conform to the facts of the universe; for these are more authoritative than statements in the Gospels. It is not too much to say that this sacrificial interpretation of Jesus implies views of nature and humanity which are unthinkable by a mind informed and trained in modern science. We cannot fit such a picture of Jesus into the cosmos which science reveals. The processes of human evolution, the methods of history, the laws of psychology stand squarely against the traditional

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dogma. The wrath of God, the eternity of punishment, the transfer of guilt and merit, the efficacy of faith to remove the consequences of sin, the necessity of propitiating God, the escape from the penalties of wrong doing under cover of the merits of another,—nothing could be more foreign to cosmic order or more contrary to ethical law, as now understood, than these assumptions, which are central in the traditional, or sacrificial interpretation of Jesus.

But the chief objection to the sacrificial interpretation of Jesus's life comes from the direction of Biblical scholarship. The traditional doctrine is not an appreciation of Jesus based upon the language of the Gospels. The more fully we understand the facts to which attention has just been drawn, the more we are impressed with the genuine but exalted humanity of Jesus: his real sympathy and tenderness; his actual reverence and prayerfulness; his moral and intellectual power, his strength and nobility of will; his clear spiritual insight; his immense and gracious person-

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ality which made it possible for him to heal and to inspire the people about him. It was his exalted humanity that enabled him to become a vast historical influence.

When we leave the plain facts of the Gospels for a celestial court with its transfer of merit, we cease to walk in Galilee with Jesus. The Son of Man as the sublime person to love and emulate vanishes when we begin to think of the Assize in the sky where sinners who simply believe certain things about him are released from endless torment. An appreciation of the Historical Jesus must not depart from the facts of the Gospels; and only the *Historical* Jesus can have a place in the universe of God that science discloses.

But more than this: Our appreciation of Jesus must certainly honor his own teachings. And those teachings all point in one direction: away from the sacrificial and toward an ethical interpretation of life. Make the tour of the parables: Everywhere the assumption of God's immediate, constant, and universal providence of love. No mediator be-

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tween father and prodigal son; the Good King welcomes and blesses the servants of love for what they had done, not for what they had believed. Pass down the glowing line of the Beatitudes; all blessings upon personal righteousness, without any reference to himself. The Golden Rule a guide to personal conduct, not a measure of theological opinion. The forgiveness of God always issuing from the forgiving spirit which man himself exercises: forgiven not because we believe in him but because we are ourselves forgiving. The Fatherhood of God as inclusive, immediate, and impartial as the sunlight: no place there for sacrificial mediation. The way of salvation the appropriation, not the propitiation, of God. Destiny shaped by Inner Life. These are the doctrines of Jesus: they are also spiritual doctrines in harmony with the latest and best science. They are doctrines that the psychologist approves and the educator puts in practice. If we are to appreciate the Historical Jesus, we must not wander off into speculative mysticism, but keep close to these great facts that constitute his message and create his influence.

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Is it true that to leave out the sacrificial element is to destroy the power and beauty of the gospel of Jesus? Let us see. Is there any sacrificial element in the parable of the Samaritan? Certainly not! And yet it has power and beauty. Is there any sacrificial element in the parable of the Prodigal? Certainly not! And yet it has power and beauty. Is there any sacrificial element in the parables of the Talents, the Leaven, the Lost Sheep? Certainly not! And yet they have power and beauty. The command of Jesus to the rich young man, seeking the way to eternal life, contains no sacrificial element; but it has had marvelous influence upon human life. The remark of Jesus to the degraded woman—"Go and sin no more,"—has no sacrificial element; but it has had great authority over human hearts. Shall we then *leave out* the sacrificial element from the gospel of Jesus? No, indeed! We only need *to keep it out*, for it is not in the teaching of Jesus. His life was a supreme illustration of the spirit of self-sacrifice,—living to bless others; but of sacrifice as a judicial

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and supernatural arrangement to satisfy the wrath of God and enable sinners to escape punishment: of this there is nothing in his great and authentic teachings.

Now, what shall we reply to those who press the objection that the Historical Jesus has no power to move, chasten, and enrich the common human heart? This demand for heart-life, and for a view of Jesus that will increase our heart-life, is sound and reasonable. But is it true that the new appreciation of Jesus leaves us cold and lifeless? Is it true that there are no sources of emotional power except in the traditional view of the cross? Is it true that sinners can only be brought to repentance by the story of vicarious sufferings?

This is our reply to these very important questions. It is certainly reasonable to hold that what was sufficient for Jesus himself as means and methods of piety is also adequate for us. Jesus found inspiration, comfort, courage, hope, and trust, sufficient for his sublime life, by going directly to God, the Father. May we not do the same?

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If this was all that he needed to do, need we do any more? Moreover, Jesus asked men to do nothing more; these sources of life within the soul, to which he resorted, are those which he commended to us as sufficient; he described no others!

The heart of Jesus was adequately equipped for all his great tasks by immediate communion with God. Surely what was sufficient for him is sufficient for us. And it was to this spiritual communion with God that he commanded all men to resort. His was not a cold or feeble piety: its sources in God are open to us; and to them he asked us to go. Jesus brought sinners to repentance, not by telling the story of vicarious suffering but by appeals to their hearts in terms of human experience. When he commanded: "Follow me," he certainly meant that we use his method in dealing with sinners.

Jesus nourished his love by direct resort to the Infinite Love. It was his plea that we do the same. What prepared him for his wonderful life of love ought to be sufficient for us. We need not feel poor,

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lonely, or helpless, when, according to his teachings, all the spiritual riches and resources to which he had access, are also ours! This is just what *obedience to the spirit of Jesus means*; and this is the heart of Christianity.

We need not fear that this new appreciation of the Historical Jesus will leave our hearts cold and our hands powerless. Hearts cold, when we can go in his footsteps directly to God? Nothing left to inspire or to comfort us? Do we not have God, whom Jesus called his Father and our Father? The Divine Love not only remains, but it remains undimmed by the shadow of Hate and the smoke of Torment. We trace it in the story of Jesus; but wider also in the evolution of humanity. An immediate love of the immanent God to share and to spread.

The new appreciation of the Historical Jesus, does not leave him without power and man without motive. It brings Jesus close to us to rebuke our sin, to heal our wounds, to strengthen us against temptation, to move us to service. We have no

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“dead Christ,” but a real Heart of Love, who shows us the open way to the Heart of God. We most truly appreciate Jesus when we make the spirit and method of his life the spirit and method of our own life. Only in this way can he be most historical and also most helpful to us.

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It is the singleness of this "life in God" that gave its uniqueness to the personality of Jesus; referring back all his experiences to the infinitely Perfect, all his sorrows to the eternal blessedness, all his disappointments to the living Fountain of hope. The deluding impressions of a drudging and suffering world were habitually checked and transcended by a recovered contact with the one and only Good.

In completely realizing the filial relation to God, he at once glorified the dependent, obedient, suffering life which is assigned to us; and rose to the height of that divine kinship which makes the affections of heaven and earth reciprocal, and identifies the essence of moral perfection in both spheres. The Man of Sorrows is our personal exemplar; the Son of God is our spiritual ideal, in whose harmonious and majestic soul, imperturbable in justice, tender in mercy, stainless in purity, and bending in protection over all guileless truth, an objective reflection of the Divine holiness is given us, answering and interpreting the subjective revelation of the conscience.

JAMES MARTINEAU.

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As we look back through the mists of the centuries to that distant time when there were no crosses glittering above city or hamlet, when Rome ruled the world by her legions and not, as since, by her priests, we see in Nazareth, a little village nestling among the hills of Galilee, a young man, whose radiant presence, sweet, strong words, and noble deeds have made all those by-paths and hill-tops forever dear and sacred to mankind. Clad in the garments of a peasant, Jesus goes to his humble labor in the simple, earnest manner of a common workman. His morning greeting is as quiet and human as that of any fellow-toiler. But in his deep, penetrating mind great thoughts are crystallizing; in his pure, fresh heart great aspirations are growing.

When we see Jesus standing on the threshold of his wonderful career, and

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remember what he said and what he did in that short ministry that changed the course of history and transformed the quality of human life, we may well exclaim: Would that we were able to lift the veil so that we might trace the evolution of his soul! Would that we might discover the processes by which his character grew: How his mind was trained; how his heart was cultivated; how he reached the supreme excellencies of his manhood and the sublime principles of his gospel. What a satisfaction it would be, if we could look into the home that sheltered him and become acquainted with the family that nurtured him!

While we cannot penetrate these mysteries, still we may be sure that his was not a squalid or a wretched home, but the realm of eloquent peace and noble simplicity, where the divine influence impinged forcibly yet graciously upon the human spirit. A humble, obscure family, and yet, all the essentials of human life were there. The field was broad enough for training in patience, and for the development of

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virtue; ample enough for the display of pride and indolence. Great holiness or hideous vice is often sheltered by a very small roof. The dwellers in such cottages have to decide between thrift and idleness, between self-control and passion, between chastity and sensuality; and to make the right decision is that which constitutes real greatness and true nobility, there and also everywhere. Temptations bear down with just as fierce onsets in such places as in palaces, and the disciplines of love and sorrow carve out just as beautiful features and heroic characters there as in high official stations. Providence, like the atmosphere, rests with equal pressure upon the hut and the mansion. All the elements of the moral economy were present in that artisan family of Nazareth town.

But our supreme interest is not in that obscure house nor in the glowing horizon that frames it round about. The facts and fancies out of which our gladness and inspiration are woven when we think of the "Christ child," radiate about a divinely human figure. Going in and out of the

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doorway, and carrying tender words and sweet smiles to and fro between Joseph and Mary, is the child Jesus—a child nourished by a love, which, surely, was far greater than that which children in general have known. Every day's unfolding life was closed with the music of a mother's tenderness; every morning was ushered in with the caresses of a father's watch-care. The hand of violence was never laid upon his tender body; the eye of angry passion was never turned upon his sensitive soul to create tears and heartaches.

More than this, it seems evident from the quality of his own life, that Jesus never heard an unkind word pass between his father and mother. He saw neither frowns, nor strife, nor bitterness, but mutual affection and helpfulness—a true home, which is man's paradise and woman's kingdom. So that, folded in the arms of an abundant love, Jesus passed his early days amidst a domestic peace, unbroken by discords; and he grew to manhood, unscarred by the sight of hatred and unburdened by the sense of fear, so far as his own family experience was concerned.

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But with older years Jesus went about the village, meeting other children and seeing other homes. In this way he learned what fear is, what sorrow is, and what anger is. He saw homes in which faces were dark with frowns and eyes were full of tears. Budding reflection called attention to the great difference between his own home and those other homes; between his parents and their neighbors; between his lot and the sad fortunes of other children. He could not help asking the question: Why these differences? In our family such unbroken joy, in the neighboring families so many angry turmoils; in my heart such undisturbed peace, in these playmates so many fears and hatreds. Why these differences?

How long the study, we cannot tell; but that Jesus discovered the true cause we know. By his personal experience, he found that love made all these immense differences. There was joy in his heart and home, because love was there supreme. Those neighboring homes were dark and sorrowful, because destitute of love. And

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never did any son of man make a greater discovery than when Jesus learned by actual experience the divine power of love, which is also the secret of holiness—a discovery more useful to human life than anything revealed by telescope or microscope:

“For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend,—
Is just our chance o’ the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been, indeed, and is,
And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
Such prize despite the envy of the world,
And, having gained truth, keep truth—that is all!”

In after years, when Jesus became a great prophet, this experience of his childhood uttered itself in that wonderful gospel of love, which has had such remarkable power over human hearts and human history. He learned in the sacred realm of his own home from Joseph and Mary that love is the principal thing. There he discovered that society may and must be reorganized by love and self-sacrifice; for that which is the true spirit for the family is also the beneficent policy for the state.

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When he began to unfold his ideal respecting the kingdom of heaven, he showed people that only a pure, authoritative love can create it. In discovering by experience the power and office of this imperial sentiment, Jesus solved the problem of human life. It only remains for science to lend the assistance of truth, and for education to incarnate and organize both in personal character and civic affairs. The tender affection which he felt in the stone cottage of Nazareth town disclosed itself afterwards in the Beatitudes and the Golden Rule, and these are still the seeds of the heavenly life.

May we not also reasonably infer that in company with brothers and sisters, Jesus discovered the mysteries and glories of child-nature. He watched with wondering eyes the processes by which the soul is unfolded and built up in strength and beauty. He saw how the infinite Father has planted a witness of himself in the conscience. He saw how character is unfolded from within. He saw that the method of the divine life is growth; a

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truth to which he gave wings in his parables of the mustard seed, the leaven, and the growth of the corn. He learned through those early experiences to appreciate the child, to understand the essential goodness of the child's nature, to trace the large outline of its possibilities, to see its imperative need of loving nurture. And out of these experiences issued, later in life, that memorable saying, which has helped us all toward simplicity of heart and tenderness of spirit, and which has made the world a better place for children ever since: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child shall in no wise enter therein; for of such is the kingdom of God."

Therefore, we may well imagine, that in years now long past, in the humble home in Nazareth town, the boy Jesus grew to that sweet, strong, manhood, which has powerfully inspired and nobly enriched all hearts and lives through the many centuries since his day. Thus it was that he learned to crown childhood itself with an act so gracious that all children have

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seemed more precious ever since; while the kingdom of heaven, set forth in those symbols of innocence and simplicity, has had a new meaning. For he extended the affectionate sanctity which the child feels for the home to field and sky, which he made the mansion of the heavenly Father; and the love, trust and obedience, which mark the perfect child, he made the attitudes and affections that constitute man a heavenly citizen, joyful in the divine presence, and glad in obeying the divine will and sharing the divine life,—

“Whose litanies, sweet offices
Of love and gratitude:
Whose sacramental liturgies,
The joy of doing good.”

There are other things that seem quite clear respecting the growth of Jesus to self-mastery, and so to the exalted position as spiritual master of the world, which he soon gained and which he still retains. We have no annals descriptive of his early manhood; but we have the mature man himself; and as we know the general

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laws of human life that govern the evolution of character, we may legitimately infer that back of the mature man, who is visible, lay certain great experiences and ethical disciplines. This inference is as rational as our conclusion that the superb picture, or the remarkable musical composition, was produced by a great creative genius.

As we follow this line of interpretation, may we not find a world of deep and illuminating meaning in the brief but suggestive statement in the Gospel that Jesus was obedient unto his father? It was needful that he should learn to obey in order that he might, later in life, be able to command with wisdom. Who can doubt but that Jesus in the days of his youth was perfected by the parental companionship and appreciation that alone make the atmosphere in which young life ripens into noble maturity. And so we read: "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

Thus Jesus came to appreciate his father, and instead of feeling restive under

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his rule, it became his greatest delight to conform to the paternal will. Jesus learned through this ever enriching companionship how much the word "father" means. And when the abundant life of mature manhood came into his soul, illuminating his features from within, the fresh consciousness of the encompassing divineness, freighted with solemn awe and sweet mystery, found expression in the term, "Our Father in Heaven." As he had found greatest joy in doing Joseph's will, he now found divinest peace in yielding to the heavenly Father's will, as spoken through the oracles of his own soul. So that when Jesus in later life called God, "Our Father," he thrilled people, because the word, by domestic associations of love, trust, and gratitude, had come to mean so much to him. The universal prayer and the parables are loaded with the power of an infinite tenderness that was nourished into activity by the loving kindness of his father. And it was into the symbolism of that tenderness that he translated the law of the universe.

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When we read the story of the Good Samaritan are we not in touch with one who himself knew by experience what it means to serve the sufferer, whoever he may be, and to befriend the stranger though he may belong to some race hated by his own people? Only an experience in kindness could have created this divine lesson in universal sympathy. When our hearts are melted to pitying tenderness by the parable of the Lost Sheep, we yield ourselves to the compassion of a man who knew how to picture the shepherding love, because he himself had exercised it. When Jesus commanded forgiveness with an eloquence and an authority which made the grace a peculiarly, though not exclusively, Christian attribute, was it not because he himself had learned by personal experience the necessity and the glory of the forgiving spirit?

If the veil were lifted, we should see Jesus poring over the Hebrew Scriptures: studying the great precepts of the Law and learning to separate kernel from husk; meditating on the sublime declara-

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tions of the Prophets and unfolding them to higher spiritual applications; and brooding over the wonderful imagery of the Psalms that deeply stirred his religious emotions and quickened his poetic impulses. Surely back of his remarkable use of texts, in exposition of Inner Life as the kingdom of heaven, lay long years of intimate acquaintance with those writings and final spiritual mastery of their contents.

If the veil were lifted and we could follow Jesus through the fields and up the mountain side, what a wonderful student of nature we should find him to be! What a quick eye for all the varied details of sky and landscape! What a keen interest in everything beautiful,—bird, flower, and tree! What a marvelous gift in using natural phenomena as symbols of spiritual truth! Only by long and loving observation could he have gained the familiarity with nature which his teachings reveal.

And now that we are able to read the stories of Jesus's Temptation with free reason and fluent fancy in a natural and human way, they assume fresh significance,

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and they acquire a historical meaning of a new and higher character. They lie before us, not as prosaic annals to be used in the making of dogma; they are instead beautiful poems which grew out of the warm reverence of friendly hearts in order to describe certain great experiences through which Jesus did undoubtedly pass on his way to mastery of himself and the world.

In the loneliness of some wilderness with great wrestlings of spirit, Jesus had to learn that the needs of the soul are greater than the wants of the body. Whoever saves humanity must do something greater than turn stones into bread; he must satisfy the hunger of the human soul for love and purity. On some mountain height with the glories and luxuries of the world spread out before him to allure and entice, Jesus had to discover that Inner Life is the one imperishable wealth that neither moth nor rust can corrupt; the one enduring power and immortal joy. Whoever redeems human hearts must do it, not with gold but with love. And aloft on

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some pinnacle of the temple, representing the old order deep rooted in tradition, Jesus had to conquer all his distrusts of himself and all his fears of the world, by coming to realize that truth alone is infinite in power and glory. Whoever brings in the Kingdom of God must do so by the truth of God.

Who can tell out of what lonely vigils, by what heart searchings, with what experiences among the deep things of the soul, Jesus came to see the central truth of his gospel: Inner Life is salvation! That he made the great discovery we know. In these legends of the Temptation we have glimpses into the heart struggles by which he made it. And at last, he stands in the clear light of history with this principle in his heart and this message on his lips.

The proposition for which we contend is this: In studying the life of Jesus, we are dealing with a historical character. His life, if a real life with any helpfulness to us, must have arisen out of an actual human and historical experience. The quality of his message and ministry as

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clearly reveal the general elements of that experience, as the finished building reveals the plan of the architect. The spirituality of his manhood, so evident and so impressive, proves a spiritual evolution out of which it came. The ethical quality of the personality before us makes it easy for imagination to describe the general line of growth followed during his youth and early manhood. If the naturalist can reproduce the form of an extinct animal from a few fossil bones, we may surely outline with some approximate accuracy the growth of soul that led up to the Sermon on the Mount and the Victory on Calvary.

In the fullness of time, therefore, Jesus became master of himself: master also of the sublime doctrine of Inner Life. During the brief period of his public ministry, we may follow him more clearly, as he applies this doctrine in his varied teachings and numerous experiences among men. Jesus is not lost in the mere circumstances of his lowly life. While his hands are busy at the bench by his side, his

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mind broods in the solicitude of an infinite love over the fortunes of the people who surround him. But he is no idle dreamer, no mere enthusiast, no visionary theorist. His fingers are not listless. One commanding object and theme, "Man," more and more engages his attention and affection. The kingdom of the Spirit does not supplant, but to him it overarches and penetrates, illuminates and sanctifies all the trivial details of his outward and physical life.

Jesus hears the village politician bemoan and denounce the Roman supremacy. Wild, startling rumors of cruelty come to his ears. He sees the excitement ferment and spread as these stories are told and retold among his neighbors. He listens to accounts of uprisings among his people against Rome before his day. Whisperings of another bloody revolt circulate. In all this, to his clear insight, one thing is evident. His people attribute all their troubles to the fact that the Roman tyrant rules in Jerusalem. Whatever sorrow befalls, whatever misfortune overtakes,

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they all cry out: That comes from the hateful and hated Gentile.

But there is another voice that Jesus hears. The old men put their heads together as they meet on the corner; and, with a flash of vengeance in their eye, they speak in bated breath of the expected Messiah. They whisper to each other: These cruelties will not last forever. The promise made to his prophets, Jehovah will surely keep. The Son of Man will soon come from heaven in clouds of fiery glory! Then Roman legions shall lie under our feet; the proud and wicked Gentile shall be humbled. We, the Lord's faithful but persecuted people, shall tread upon our oppressors. Israel shall occupy the land in peace, and all sorrows shall have an end.

Jesus noticed that whenever a traveler, bringing some tale of fresh cruelty, came to the village, the curious and excited people gathered around him, and there was first a feeling of dismay and horror that found vent in execrations upon Rome. Then, as the Messianic Hope came to mind, and they

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talked over the recent signs and wonders that were supposed to herald the Deliverer's approach, a savage gleam lighted up their faces; and their voices became husky with passion as they spoke of the time, surely near at hand, when they would tread their enemies into the dust.

From such crowds Jesus turned away in deep sorrow and with painful amazement. And when he went into the village synagogue expecting to find there spiritual wisdom and helpfulness for his troubled and misguided people, his sorrow and amazement deepened. The rabbis, as a rule, spoke of tithes and offerings, and simply expounded and elaborated the law for Levitical purity. There was no word that went with power into the soul, soothing the heart and enlightening the mind. For then, much as now, those who asked for emancipating truths were bidden study a text; those who craved bread were given a stone; those who were perishing from lack of sympathy were commanded to offer a sacrifice; and those ready to engage in heroic deeds were asked to believe mere

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speculations about trivial subjects. The teachings were mere commentary and idle casuistry, with no direct contact with divine realities, and no fresh, inspiring view of life. All seemed confused and blind. The secret of that deliverance, for which they were so anxiously awaiting, and which was within reach of everyone, dawned not upon the mind of teacher or worshiper.

The keen appreciation of the sorrows of his people and the vivid consciousness of their great mistake respecting the way of deliverance, were indeed a growing burden that weighed more and more heavily upon Jesus. There were, in truth, griefs and burdens and wrongs on every side, as there are all about us today. Children were neglected; homes were broken up; family feuds abounded; neighbors quarrelled; young people were reckless and sensual; the poor were vicious, the rich were corrupt; leaders were cruel, officials took bribes, the people were sordid; and so, tears were a flood and groans a mighty chorus. And, saddest of all, the people

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were mistaken about the cause of their troubles. They saw the tax gatherer or the centurion, and said, "He is the cause of all our misfortunes. If we could only destroy him we should be perfectly happy!"

But Jesus had an eye for the deeper things of the soul. He saw that the root of the difficulty was in their own being, that it was poverty and perversity of spirit, leanness and meanness of the soul. This does not signify that conditions are unimportant, but that the creative impulse is most important; not that circumstances have no value but that a supreme enthusiasm is Lord over all; not that environment is to be ignored, but that it is the soul which shapes and utilizes environment.

The Jews of Palestine at that time anxiously scanned the heavens for signs of the advent of the Promised One of God. They questioned every stranger to learn, if possible, that the Messiah had been born. But to Jesus this waiting for outward help was a sad delusion. The salvation they sought could never come. He saw that the

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deliverance must come within every soul. The divine emancipation must unfold from within; it is in the great thought that illuminates and the noble sentiment that stirs to action. What they needed was Inner Life,—more truth to guide, more love to sanctify, more hope to uplift, more sympathy to quicken.

Jesus understood with perfect clearness the true character of man's need; not freedom from Rome, not the Lord from heaven, but freedom from sin, and the Lord within. Should Rome fall and the skies let down a wondrous king, the dark minds and warring hearts of the people would continue, and the bondage would be as great as ever. Nothing that might transpire without them as a mere political event or social revolution could place them within the gates of paradise. The leaven of love must work within the soul before heaven could be reached. First the heavenly spirit in the heart and then the kingdom of heaven in the world. Let Rome, then, rule on, and the firmament stand; they could all, then and there, make of

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themselves a kingdom of heaven by growth and purity of soul! Have that Inner Life, then the soul is a kingdom at peace, the home is a paradise, the neighborhood is a sanctuary, and the whole universe is an embodied smile of God! This was the gospel that Jesus went forth to teach, in order that his people might have eternal life, not as a future purchase, but as a present reality.

This was the "good news" that Jesus proclaimed: That goodwill toward one another is what God, who is good, asks of everyone. This is all that heaven demands and all that the world needs. The good news is the discovery that goodwill itself is the kingdom of heaven. Just because Jesus made people feel all this supremely, the statement respecting goodwill among men became the theme of the angels who welcomed him to the earth. It was a true instinct that created the poem, as has already been stated. A song of goodwill in the skies, because his good news, or gospel, had made goodness more plentiful and more powerful among men.

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To the wayside group that had come up from the hamlet nestling at the foot of the hill, Jesus spoke the great truths of the spiritual life in simple words that befitted their majesty. To their wan, restless unbelief, that found no divineness in their present life, he revealed the Father. He made the trees, the flowers, the birds, the clouds serve as symbols of Providence. He made them see the Infinite Beauty resting on field and sky. He made them share his feeling that he was indeed a child lying in the lap of Infinite Love. He aroused in them the consciousness of God as Indwelling Life.

Jesus told the people about the wonderful things of love; how love for each other would give them a new life; how it would sweeten all occasions and rectify all wrongs; how it would make woman pure and high-minded, and man peaceful and clean-hearted; how it would do away with strife, and sorrow, and cruelty; how it would set the solitary together in families, restrain the wayward, and establish justice and mercy throughout the world! He dis-

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covered to them the sphere of the Spirit and its marvelous riches of joy and peace. He told them how, if they took this sense of God as the Supreme Goodness and this holy love as a rule of life back with them into the hamlet, its sorrows and evils would cease and each one would become a kingdom of heaven. The person who should thus rule his own soul and serve his brother would be greater than the man who should drive the Romans out of Jerusalem. Every one who grows into an abundance of Inner Life reaches what the Son of Man could not bestow. Salvation is not what is put on, but what is inwrought; not what exists without but what grows within; not what transpires but what inspires.

We see Jesus trying to save his people by teaching them a new ideal or doctrine of salvation and by leading them along a new way of life. He endeavored to recreate society by leading the people to begin with the soul and work out from the primary sources of life in it. He showed them how they might make themselves a kingdom of heaven, no matter how humble or oppres-

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sive their external conditions. Jesus was not indifferent to public righteousness and social conditions; his condemnation fell swift and severe upon unjust judge and unmerciful master; but he went into the very depths of the heart for the recreative energies and supreme sources of a new humanity. These teachings of his respecting Inner Life were as "gentle and beautiful as the light of a star." The smile that they created still lingers on the human face. The enthusiasm that they kindled is still a mighty power among men. They are still a glorious and gladsome gospel of the blessed God!

When we see that lovely figure moving across the hillsides of Galilee and along the shores of Tiberias, and when we also hear these teachings, so spiritual and sublime, our hearts also burn within us. We feel that we there touch human nature in its ripened purity and full-grown nobility. Jesus seems a wondrously gentle and humane man, of whom we love to think, with whom it is refreshing to hold communion. He illustrates "the ascendancy

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of man, as spirit, over the physical world.” We find in him “preëminent susceptibility to the divine side of present realities.” There is a “rare and gracious quality in his personality” that gives him great spiritual attractiveness and wonderful human interest. We find that “his words stir the soul as summer dews call up the faint and sickly grass.” We most gladly own that he is “the dearest and divinest appearance in human form that ever beamed on earthly scenes.”

As thought and love take hold of that sublime personality, standing not in miraculous and spectral isolation, but within the realm of humanity, we find our life growing sweeter and tenderer. We see no halo of mystical light about his head, but whenever we turn from his presence to the world we see all men robed in a new sanctity; so that we restrain our anger, when tempted, while we multiply our services of love to those in need. He is unto us a sublime example and a powerful encouragement. The human nature that blossomed in him into such moral and spiritual beauty is ours

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also, to blossom likewise, if we but give it the warmth of love and the light of truth.

We see Jesus again. He has become famous. The people crowd around him in superstitious awe or in officious familiarity. The women also come, bringing their unawed and ill-kept children. But children were then of little account to many grown people. That sad depreciation has not yet been half outgrown. "This is no place to bring children," say the rough men; and they begin to chide the timid women and tell them that they ought to be ashamed to come there and take up the Master's time!

But Jesus, unsoiled by ambition and unspoiled by success, free from pride and self-consciousness, beams upon the mothers and their children ineffable sympathy, and beckons them to come near to him. He then lays his hand lovingly on the children, speaks noble words that soften and hallow all hearts, and puts a child in their midst as symbol of the purity of which the kingdom of heaven must be built. What modesty! What tenderness! What human-

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ity! That, indeed, is a lovely picture; and we dwell upon it with ever-growing delight. Whether we are Jews or Christians, rationalists or conservatives, there indeed is something that appeals to us as pre-eminently and perennially beautiful because nobly human! We, too, will have kinder words for the children. That Jewish youth was tenderer than a mother! He bows us all in reverence before the child, where we cannot too long linger or too devotedly minister!

Again we look. Clouds, dark and ominous, have gathered. The rulers have heard of Jesus, and fear his power over the lower classes; for, in their dull minds, they suppose that he, too, like many social agitators and revolutionists of the time, is aiming at political mischief. He suffers the misfortune of being misunderstood. Jesus, moreover, may have allowed the enthusiasm of his followers to lead him to undertake too great a task. However this may have been, he finds difficult and thorny the path of the social reformer—for he aimed at a new society founded upon a new

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order of manhood; not political revolution, but spiritual evolution.

At last Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to teach there the gospel, received as so blessed in Galilee. But the rulers say: "This man is dangerous; he must be put out of the way!" Jesus now sees that the end is near. The shadow falls; the darkness deepens! How terrible was the grief of his great heart over his unfulfilled ideal, the scene in Gethsemane, over which nations have wept, reveals! That was real grief; real disappointment. He cannot cause deaf ears to hear or blind eyes to see. His doctrine of Inner Life has no charms for the coarse and the venal. His kingdom of heaven seems too vague and theoretical for the practical politician. He cannot win them as he would; but he can die as he had lived—calm, meek, self-poised. And so he meets his fate, with neither wrath nor fear; with neither despair nor disloyalty. Sufficiency and sovereignty of the soul—the supremacy of the moral ideal—must find in him a glorious witness and standard bearer even in death!

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We stand at the foot of the cross, and behold with reverent hearts the supreme illustration of constancy to moral sentiment and religious aspiration. It is not the flowing blood or the darkened heavens that we see, but a brother man, who proves that the human soul is mightier than the world. That cross is but the revelation of human nature; there the preëminence of Inner Life was revealed and authenticated. Jesus, in that supreme hour, was not the evidence of a reconciliation between God and man; for, in all his teachings he implied the Father's infinite love, not as a future but as a present reality, not as a purchase, but as a gift, which men need only open their hearts to understand and receive.

Jesus, in that garden of agony and on that cruel cross, is witness to his imperial doctrine of Inner Life and illustration of man's spiritual possibility. The cross is not a blood-signed pardon, but a divinely illuminated lesson. Jesus did not bear our cross; that we ourselves must do, as he himself taught, but he made our tasks of

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cross-bearing easier. Within the influence of that serene heroism of the spirit, patience, fidelity, self-sacrifice, are easy graces. We linger there, because we find a great soul proving what our life ought to be; and as we linger we find ourselves growing heavenward toward the heroic possibility there actually realized.

This is the Jesus that we know, study, love, and follow: master of the spirit; creator of a new order of manhood; artist of the Inner Life; a "sublime genius" who rightfully became the center of the world's hope and love. He is to us revelation and inspiration, not by any strange and supernatural performance, but because in him "the moral perfection of man stands forth in its root and unity." We do not care to insist dogmatically on the absolute sinlessness of Jesus. This seems to us a barren abstraction and a fruitless discussion. What does seem clear and helpful is the fact that the spirit of Jesus represents the essential element of man's divinest life.

With all his humility and tenderness, there is in Jesus unparalleled purity,

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strength, and manliness of character; a prophet of the soul, who pours out "a doctrine as beautiful as light, as sublime as heaven, and as true as God." He has blessings for us in all the circumstances of life, "light for the chamber of grief, power of endurance amid the struggles of suffering nature," and yet companion meet in times of joy and peace. There is no darkness so intense but that his Beatitudes will bring some illumination. There is no occasion so gloomy and cruel but that the mention of his name will bring some sweet and helpful memories!

For some years, Jesus, as a sublime character, expressive of Inner Life, appeared to men in the glory of his humanity, and their affection for him operated in their hearts as a saving moral power. They had great love for Jesus, but practically no theology about him. But soon there were those who began to be dissatisfied with his spiritual leadership and his purely historical character; for they imagined that to think of him in that fashion lowered his dignity and cheapened

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his gospel. Also, Jesus the historical character necessarily came into contact with the speculations of the philosophers. The thinkers of the time naturally found in him the solution of their philosophical problems: a fact which was in itself a tribute to his greatness. An inevitable transformation of Christianity followed, but it was a transformation that carried the world far away from the spirit and gospel of Jesus himself. Then the human Jesus disappeared, crowded aside by theological doctrines respecting a creative being called the "Logos" (translated "Word" in the Fourth Gospel), a monstrosity in the household of philosophy, born of the union of Greek speculation and oriental mysticism. The very word "Jesus" disappeared from the Christian literature of the third and fourth centuries, and we find everywhere nothing but the dogmatic term, "Logos," or its equivalent, the Son.

As we run over the mystical phrases respecting the theological Christ, with which all are so familiar, our hearts cry out: Where is that sweet human face, that

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heroic man, whom we saw sowing gladness among the simple folk of Galilee? The dogmatists buried him out of sight under a mass of theological rubbish. They took away our loving and lovable Jesus and gave us a lifeless abstraction, as cheerless as the grave and as spectral as a ghost. They obscured his smile by a terrible frown. They sealed the lips that told the story of the Samaritan, and they opened, instead, an oracle of unreason. They erased the Beatitudes and wrote in their place obscure mysteries.

The cross, which ought to be to us a lesson of heroism, marking the height to which human nature can rise, became a scene of judicial penalty and painful propitiation. Jesus, the moral teacher, vanished. The mystical Logos advanced; but his lips are dumb respecting human duties; his mission is supernatural and his ministry is judicial; while he is too exalted to be an example and too remote to be an inspiration. Jesus, the brother, friend, and master to love, disappeared largely from human minds. Instead, people were

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given a theory about him in which to believe. The gospel of Inner Life was laid aside. Instead, our fathers were presented with a pretentious chart of infinite being to try to trace. That plea for growth of soul in likeness to his life was hushed. Instead, the world was commanded to accept, on faith, a mysterious dogma about Jesus. And history abundantly shows how impossible it has been to unite in one conception the Historical Jesus and that theological fiction. Just so far as that dogma is emphasized, that far the spiritual supremacy of Jesus is obscured and his religious helpfulness is lessened.

And yet we must remember that in all the churches that have put the theological Christ foremost in their creeds, and in all ages, the spirit of Jesus has been present. For no weather chart, however false, can shut out the sunshine from the earth. Everywhere there have been devout souls who have known and loved the real Jesus, just as true hearts everywhere beat under the most barbaric costumes. One may have a great many superstitions and still

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live a sweet and noble life. So, also, one may hold a great many erroneous notions respecting the character of Jesus's mission and yet be deeply penetrated by the Sermon on the Mount. Nevertheless, these erroneous notions are burdensome and harmful.

O Church! bring back the real Jesus, the Jesus who walked in Galilee and blessed the children; who taught so grandly and lived so divinely; who died on the cross a death as heroic as his life had been pure! So long ecclesiastics have kept him buried beneath dogmas that obscure the beauty of his life and hidden behind sacraments that divert attention from his spirit to his blood! For how many years did Christians speculate about him, fight for his sepulchre, and persecute in his name! Dogmatists for centuries have said "believe" where he said "do." They have said "fear" where he said "love." They have frowned on human nature where he smiled. They have taught creeds where he spoke parables. The morality affirmed by him as sufficient they have put aside

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as inadequate. O Church! no longer feed us on dogmatic mysteries; no longer imprison his spirit; no longer neglect his gospel! We are weak, wayward and weary; give us back Jesus to be our friend, exemplar, teacher and inspirer.

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Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul. Drawn by its severe harmony, ravished with its beauty, he lived in it, and had his being there. Alone in all history, he estimated the greatness of man. One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his world.

The excellence of Jesus, and of every true teacher, is, that he affirms the Divinity in him and in us,—not thrusts himself between it and us.

Jesus speaks always from within, and in a degree that transcends all others. In that is the miracle. I believe beforehand that it ought to be so. All men stand continually in the expectation of the appearance of such a teacher.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

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Authority is inherent and organic in the universe. The authority of God is immanent in every molecule of which the cosmos is builded, in every creature by whom it is inhabited. God dwells in every particle and spirit, and there is no possibility of permanent revolt or complete chaos. If some bad men seem to take a straight tangent of wilfulness, uninfluenced by any divine attraction, it is because the orbit to which God holds them is so large that we do not notice its curvature. But they are not beyond the reach of his power or the ministry of his love. There is no absolutely tangent motion among men any more than among comets. The human will, with all its freedom, operates under the conditions of an omnipotent law that is omnipresent love. The long-armed gravity that reaches through the immensities, the physical energy that builds crystals with perfect

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mathematical precision, the chemical affinity that celebrates microscopic weddings between atoms, the organic impulse that builds a tree or weaves the gossamer wings of insects, the manifold creativeness that endows the bee with instinct and man with intelligence—these are mandates of a throne that pervades all space.

It is by authority of God that hills and valleys are clothed and unclothed at the changing of the seasons. The river seems to wind here and there at its own sweet will; but in reality, it is the earth through the sleepless force of gravity that leads it all the way from mountain to ocean. The waters follow the line that the finger of the Lord draws across the face of the earth. The acorn bears within itself the authority of a thousand oaks. Its artistic and organic impulse is constrained to build an oak. The pebble is held to its bed on the mountain side by the authority of the whole round world. The invisible fingers that cover the winter windows with crystal ferns do not work unauthorized. A divine command sends the eagle into the upper

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air. It is by authority that skylark and oriole sing. The lily is compelled by an imperative commission to lift aloft its immaculate lips to be kissed by dew and sunshine.

Divine authority is not centralized in distant isolation or committed to a special hierarchy, but it is diffused everywhere. The providence of the living God is not an infrequent gust from some heavenly shore, but a vital breath that blows perpetually. We do not have to migrate to find God. We have simply to become conscious of what is eternally present. Every atom, every seed, every spirit has an inherent authority, behind which and in which God forever stands. Divine authority is

“This shaping potency behind the egg,
This circulation swift of deity,
Where suns and systems inconspicuous float
As the poor blood-disks in our mortal veins.”

God has more especially poured himself into humanity. Here we find the highest types of life and the most marvelous displays of creativeness. Progress in organ-

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ization marks the ascending scale of the divine incarnation, which reaches from crystal to brain cell, from the dim yearning of the savage to Buddha's pity and "Lord Christ's heart." Thus it is that God distills his own authority into man through the ages, in the growth of his brain in extent, in complexity, in delicacy. Every added brain cell gives the soul another window for the vision of truth. Every coördination of nerve tissues by discipline and training, as with musician, artist, or linguist, opens a new channel for the influx of higher life. There is more divinity in some men and women, because they are more highly organized; they are the outcome of a longer and more active brain-growth and soul-building.

There are many degrees of authority among men, but the saintly spirit has superlative influence. The merchant prince is known in all the markets and the world is full of his glory,—a useful man to his age; but he dies and in a few years no one knows where he was buried. The warrior makes and unmakes the map of the

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world and all men tremble at the glance of his eye,—he too may bear a divine commission; but he dies and clowns make a jest of his name. The scholar hives the honey of his life in a book that soon grows dingy in the obscure corner of the library,—a faithful servant of the ideal; but he dies and only a few students bless his memory as they enjoy the fruits of his labors. Some man of superior goodness actually lives the moral law, doing a monumental service of goodwill. He is immortal; he tents within the lonely heart; he calls to self-sacrifice the sleeping soul and raises to life those dead in sin. Wherever his name is spoken the “Real Presence” abides. The torch of truth which we hold aloft lights the pathway of a fellow traveler for a time; but our torch of love kindles in his heart a sacred flame that will never go out.

We turn to a person of transcendent purity for spiritual authority. His character is an argument that texts, statistics, and statutes can neither improve nor invalidate. Moral law incarnate in a gracious

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and heroic personality has an authority that no official ordination can confer, nor is it dimmed by the lapse of ages. "We believe that holiness confers a certain insight," wrote our great American prophet. Beauty pleases us, truth strengthens us, the good commands us. A genius charms us, a philosopher instructs us, the saint leads us. Art embellishes life and makes the world more attractive; learning trains and enriches the mind and makes life more dignified; religion, the artist of the good ideal, regenerates the soul and brings in a new kingdom of love.

Religious authority has been and always will be a supreme influence in the world: the influence of those who have a genius for holiness and helpfulness. The imperial Augustus is a vague form to all but a few; the learned men of his time are barely known to the antiquarian; the merchants who supplied the wants of that gorgeous age are forgotten; but the Man of Nazareth, whose personality was a diviner parable than any that he spoke, has to-day supreme authority and creative power in cottage and in palace!

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The office of Jesus's authority is to make men like himself, so far as he stood for the essential truths of the spiritual life. In order that this result may follow, however, men must come into rational, sympathetic relation with his character. They must feed upon his spirit rather than recite dogmas that relate to his origin and rank. Belief in the miraculous birth of Jesus will no more make us like him than belief in the potency of the planetary influences at the birth of Angelo will make us master artists. The true authority of Jesus, like all spiritual influences, is not magisterial dictation, but personal inspiration and dynamic disclosure of truth.

The churches have often destroyed the religious authority of Jesus by the unnatural and irrational use made of his name. They have appealed to him to silence reason and tyrannize over the sentiments. They have demanded assent to dogmas about him instead of cultivating a loving appreciation of his life. They have failed to see that if Jesus's authority acts on men at all, it must act through their reason

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and their conscience. They must see and feel that Jesus has authority because he had a divine experience. Not until the truth of the gospel has been passed upon and taken up into one's life, has the authority of Jesus been perfected. His helpfulness to us is seen, not in the orthodoxy of our opinions, but in the divinity of our lives. Our salvation does not consist in our assertion that he was the Son of God, but in being ourselves true sons of God.

The authority of Jesus is not illustrated by believing that it was the Messiah who said, "Father, forgive them," but in being able to say out of our own actual heart-life, when we are buffeted by enemies, "Father, forgive them." It is not shown by holding that he miraculously raised Lazarus, but in tenderly nursing the Lazarus suffering at our door. It is not displayed by saying, "Our Father," because he so spoke, but in being able to stand on the mount of vision and affirm out of our serene and joyous experience, "Our Father," as the expression of the loving reverence that we actually feel. In the

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time of trial and danger we are saved by the weapon sheathed in our own soul, and not by one hung up in some far-off armory.

An eminent American divine used these words not long since when speaking on a notable occasion: "Authority is not in the church as Catholics say; not in reason as rationalists say; not in Scripture as the Reformers said; but in God speaking in the soul through Christ!" Such language as this tempts one into hot protest. We are prompted to exclaim: "Poor God, so impotent that he can only reach his own child by way of Nazareth! Poor man, so destitute of the bread of life that he starves until a Gospel page flutters his way!" This teaching is a practical denial of the Fatherhood of God; central in the gospel of Jesus himself. A doctrine like this, that makes orphans of the vast majority of the human race, is in no sense a *gospel*, or good news. It is a denial of the Eternal Goodness.

No divine authority except in the words of Christ? Where indeed does God oper-

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ate if not in all souls? How does man exist at all, if not through the influence of the heavenly tides of life sweeping every moment into receptive hearts? By what power did the Parthenon rise, Buddha heal human sorrows, and Socrates triumph in death, if not by authority of him who shepherds every soul? To preserve our faith in the love and mercy and justice of the Almighty, to have a God worthy of our worship, we must think of him as passing by no lonely soul but spreading a providence of light and love wherever a heart beats. We do not honor Jesus by making such extravagant and unreasonable claims for him. He made no such claims for himself. This doctrine alienates men from Jesus and greatly lessens his real authority over human hearts.

The world begins to take a fresh interest in the problem presented by the topic, "The authority of Jesus." There is a tendency abroad to question all kinds of authority. The influence of science disintegrates dogmas and dethrones authoritative personages. All orthodoxies have

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been shattered by modern thought. To many the destructive side of Gospel Criticism has left the message of Jesus without certainty or impressiveness. One thing is clear, whatever the authority of Jesus may be, it must be in line with the universal laws of human life. Let us see whether we can bring a new sense of reality into this realm, so that we may keep both the freedom of reason and the authority of Jesus.

To do this, let us first briefly trace the wide sweep of authoritative acts and facts. In the distant past, some man discovered how to build an arch by tying his material together with a keystone. This builder's act was authoritative because it was the discovery and embodiment of an essential truth of Nature. He found the way to do something which is of great importance to mankind. Every one who builds takes advantage of his discovery. The arch with a keystone is now an important factor in all building enterprises. The authority of the principle of mechanics which that creative act revealed shapes the labor of every hand. The engineer who recently threw

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a bridge with a single span across the Niagara river was obedient to the authority of that original discovery.

But there are things in life besides gateways and bridges—things more precious than stone arches and vaulted roofs. There are spiritual characters that must be securely based and solidly constructed. The varied materials of our daily life must be compacted and tied together by a spiritual purpose that shall act as a keystone. We must protect our heart treasures, the immortal harvests of our affections, by an architecture of the spirit which shall be so strongly builded that no storm can beat down the temple of our life and no flood sweep away the riches of the soul.

To a little company of people Jesus spoke, out of his experience, one of his discoveries respecting the spiritual life: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee: leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift." What is the truth

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here disclosed? That to be forgiven we must first be forgiving; that the essence of piety is not outward form, but inward feeling: that we cannot be at peace with God while at enmity with our neighbor; that the way of salvation lies through the heart, not through an external rite; that in the sight of God our rank is determined, not by our altar offerings, but by our love for man, and that our real blessedness consists in service rather than in sacrifice. Here Jesus set forth a fundamental principle of spiritual architecture which he had discovered in his own experience. He had lived the truth in his own life, and the result had proved it to be a supreme fact in the spiritual universe.

All this was said in an obscure corner by a man without position or following. But the question of authority is not determined by artificial rank or social condition. It hinges solely here: Is this an essential fact? Is it true to the constitution of things? Here lay the authority of the builder of the first arch; here also is the authority of Jesus. This truth respecting

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forgiveness represents the absolute science of life, because a fundamental principle of the moral order. It also represents the supreme art of life, because whoever puts it into practice finds his act justified by a permanence, beauty and blessedness of existence which he can reach in no other way.

The fact also that Jesus had made this discovery in his own experience and proved it true by putting it into his own life gave superlative authority to his teaching. He had tested the proposition, "Forgive and you shall be forgiven," so that like the man who built the first arch he could say: "This is not guesswork or theory, but a primary principle of human life. If you will make the experiment, forgive your enemy, you will find in the result wrought out in your own life the complete demonstration of the spiritual law."

This is just what people have been doing for two thousand years. They have been taking the teaching of Jesus, made vital and commanding by his example, and putting it into life. Whoever has done this

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has found by experience just what Jesus discovered: This law of forgiveness,—a principle of spirituality productive of joy, a sentiment of love supremely beneficent,—is true. The appeal to life demonstrates the gospel. Here is the spiritual keystone that ties together and makes firm and strong the arch of life. Here is the gracious workmanship that makes beautiful and permanent the structure of character. Here is a supreme law which, if a man live, he shall have eternal life, not as a future reward, but as a present possession.

The authority of Jesus is in the fact that he made clear a better way of life, as the builder of the first arch made plain a better method of handicraft. Jesus published and demonstrated in himself an essential fact, eternal in the constitution of the moral order. Whoever has tried to put his teaching into practice has found it to be the pathway to blessedness. Millions of men have made the experiment and reached the result. The world has moved steadily toward this point since his

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day. Here is his influence and authority. All this was felt at the beginning. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount it is recorded that Jesus "taught them as one having authority." He made this impression because he spoke out of his own experience directly to the hearts of his hearers. He spoke with power, because he spoke with simplicity and earnestness about great truths that were to him a personal discovery.

Jesus's use of the Law and the Prophets illustrates the quality and method of his authority, as just described. He used Scripture for illustration, but not as a dictum to overawe those who listened. His appeal to texts was spiritual and educational, always with due respect for the reason and conscience of his hearers. It was never dogmatic, with the implication that the verbal statement is a final rule overriding mind and heart. He never said: Believe this just because it is so written. His habit was to plead: "Hold this saying like a torch out into life and see how far it will light up your pathway."

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Jesus's method of handling Scripture shows a deep insight into the true nature of both text and human soul, and it affords us a wise example which we may well follow.

The movement toward spirituality in religion,—toward forgiveness that overcomes hatred and toward service as better than sacrifice,—which Jesus created, has been as irresistible as the flow of the mountain waters to the sea, because the authority of the facts which he revealed is as supreme as the law of gravitation. This influence is not, however, something supernatural and apart from our common experience. The gospel is authoritative because natural and human, and therefore most truly divine.

The authority of Jesus comes into line with countless other experiences. Show the world, as some far-off Egyptian did, how to care for the sick poor, making plain the joy and nobility of that service of mercy, and under the authority of that love hospitals will be set up all over the world. Likewise, when Jesus told the story of the Samaritan, he described a way

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of life that appeals to the reason and conscience as true and beautiful. The act of kindness there pictured is authoritative because in harmony with the moral constitution of human society, and therefore fruitful of infinite joy. The discovery having been made that this is the better way of life, multitudes walk in it.

The world is full of similar illustrations. Show how to treat wounds by a new method as Dr. Lister did, and this healing wisdom will fly round the globe as on wings of angels. His discovery will be authoritative wherever a surgeon operates upon a patient. Likewise when Jesus found a wounded, but repentant, publican, and warmed him into new life by his great love, that act also became authoritative. The sympathy shown Zaccheus revealed the constitution of the soul and demonstrated the way of helpfulness. The friendly deed showed how the spiritually wounded may be healed. It revealed the power of sympathy and defined the source of gladness. Under the authority of that loving act, as under the authority of Lister's skill, mill-

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ions of men and women have reclaimed the wayward and healed the sick in spirit.

And all this has come about, not because Jesus was the promised Messiah, not because he was the mediatorial God-Man, not because he was the mystical second person of the Trinity, but because by his spiritual experience he was able to set forth a supreme fact of life with power, which, when set forth, is evidently as superior to the old way of life as the arch to the former style of building. The authority of Jesus, therefore, does not lie in the fact that he had a supernatural rank or a superhuman experience (this would have destroyed his authority), but rather in the fact that he had a strictly human experience, so that what he discovered in his own life is applicable to ours.

The authority of Jesus is, then, the authority of a remarkable religious experience, in which he laid hold of the primary and essential facts and laws of the spiritual life. This interpretation sets him in the clear light of truth, free from mysticism, on a throne of power which physical science

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cannot overthrow, with a sceptre of influence which textual criticism cannot strike from his hand.

Two advantages issue from this interpretation: (1) We will no longer go to Jesus for authority outside the circle of his experience. Upon all such matters as the authorship of the Pentateuch and the Psalms, the credibility of the story of the fall of Adam, and kindred topics, he had no special experience and shed no light. (2) The fact that he probably shared some of the erroneous notions of his time, that lay quite apart from his special experience, does not invalidate his ethical authority. The propositions of Euclid are not set aside by the fact that Euclid believed the earth flat. But in reference to matters of greatest moment and most frequent urgency, matters of conduct upon which our happiness and the happiness of others most depend, here Jesus had a remarkable experience, and his words on these problems are authoritative. Not in the sense of final dogma to be blindly accepted, but as great truths to be freely, though reverently, studied and applied.

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When we count the many vital points of human life on which Jesus spoke, the many phases of duty made clear, the many problems illustrated, the many paths to joy and blessing described, the multitude of primary spiritual truths which go right home to the center of our common life and demonstrate themselves when we apply them,—this fact alone proves the large proportions of his religious genius, while it reveals a wonderful experience in spiritual things which we may well trust. The validity of the teachings which came out of that experience is shown by their fruitage. When men have lived them there have been joys innumerable and excellencies indescribable.

As we look along the centuries in Christian lands from the time of Jesus to the present, we see that human life has everywhere moved up toward the ideals set forth in the Gospels. Often slowly, never uniformly, but from age to age there has been some onward movement. In spite of certain apparent retrogressions, the centuries show a decided progress. Cruelties

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have vanished and gracious humanities have multiplied. Evils have withered, while purity, mercy, justice, and forgiveness abound more and more. The worship of God becomes more spiritual; the service of man more general. There is an increasing realization, in home and church, in school and state, of those moral principles which Jesus taught and lived. So much still to be done: battles for the right unfinished, the mountain heights of love and purity unreachd by many; and yet, there really have been substantial gains!

Wherever men have put the teachings of Jesus into practice, the individual and social results justify the effort. Wherever men have tried to do by others as they would have others do by them, joy has come on all sides; and human life has moved upward in this direction. Wherever men have made love the master motive, there blessedness has followed; and this divine sentiment more and more rules human hearts everywhere. Wherever the self-sacrificing spirit of the cross has been obeyed, there the desert has blossomed as

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the rose; and this loving service for others continually spreads. We do not credit all this to Jesus; God and man unceasingly work for these high ends. But what we do claim is this: The results illustrate the spiritual authority of Jesus. The principles which he taught for the guidance of human life have, in the great sweep of history, been proved supremely good and true.

We do not hold that Jesus touched all points of human duty, illustrated all forms of excellence, and exhausted the treasury of spiritual wisdom, so that there are no more discoveries to be made in the realm of ethics. But it is a conservative claim that he did make clear and powerful certain supreme facts of our moral life that can never be outgrown, and that must have a high place in the greatest character and the noblest civilization.

There is one other point of supreme interest in this connection, which must be briefly stated, although its great importance makes it deserving of extended discussion. It is this: Besides these truths

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respecting conduct and character, which Jesus affirmed and which the ages have confirmed, he also set forth two great convictions: The Fatherhood of God and the Hope of Immortality, not original with him, but affirmed by him with great power and clearness. In the gospel of Jesus, these two spiritual convictions are inextricably bound up with his more distinctly ethical teachings. They came out of the same experience; they seemed to him equally clear and authoritative; they are so interwoven with his ethical judgments that both go together, each in turn leaning upon and supporting the other; and to him evidently the more distinctly religious seemed as necessary to a complete human life as the more distinctly moral.

We cannot conceive of Jesus's morality apart from its theistic basis, and we cannot conceive of his theism apart from its practical fruitage in a good life. The nobility, beauty and authority of Jesus would be swept away should we fail to listen to both "Thy will be done," in the garden, and to the "Go, sin no more," spoken to

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the woman. Out of the same great life-experience came Jesus's strong hold upon love as the master motive of life, and upon love also as the law of the universe.

Now, the point which needs to be urged with all possible emphasis, is this: Shall we accept the authority of Jesus respecting our human relations and reject what he says about our spiritual relations? The reasonable conclusion certainly is that one who went so deeply into life that he laid hold of primary and fundamental truths on the side of morality in a most remarkable manner, must also by the same experience have grasped with equal vigor and clearness the primary and fundamental facts of our being as they relate to Providence and Destiny. To go far enough to see what is eternally right between man and man is to go far enough to see the bonds that bind us to the Infinite. The lamp of experience bright enough to reveal the quality of our human brotherhood is also bright enough to make clear the quality of our divine sonship.

Jesus, speaking out of his experience,

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set forth a hundred commands of life which touch the wide circle of our human relations. So powerful and comprehensive was his grasp upon the deep things of character that he spoke with supreme authority. The ages have steadily moved toward this ideal, and as humanity has moved onward toward him, the world has grown more noble, attractive, and gladsome. The best that we can dream of human happiness to-day is that his gospel be lived by all. If that were done, heaven would be here.

If therefore the centuries demonstrate in this large and wonderful way the truth of his central and essential teachings in this realm of human conduct, with what confidence may we accept the message that he, speaking out of the same experience, brings us about the love of God and the immortality of the soul? There can be no greater authority for the hopes and trusts of the pious heart than the affirmations of one whose teachings upon the practical side of life have been demonstrated to be true, beautiful, and good by millions of men during some two thousand years. If the

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best in the world to-day comes from putting his gospel into practice, we may be supremely confident that what he says of the love of God is also true.

Moreover, the fruitage of these ethical principles of the gospel is largest and richest only as ripened in the sunshine of his teachings about the Fatherhood of God. We reach the widest human good only as we walk by faith in the divine love. Our confidence in the Fatherhood of God and the eternal life is a vast help to our ethical life. To get the best out of the ethics of Jesus, we must also go with him in his spiritual convictions. And as there can be no schism or duplicity in Nature, the fact that this practical ethical fruitage does follow the spiritual convictions respecting God and Immortality justifies the conclusion that the more distinctly religious teachings of Jesus, which are also the affirmations of the soul, are true. Here again we see that the authority of Jesus is the authority inherent in human experience. His gospel can be incarnated in our life because it came out of a kindred

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life, and when put into life it fruits in supreme blessedness. Nothing can go deeper or reach higher than this appeal to life.

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